Vol.18

ROKUDA NOBORU

F
VOL.18

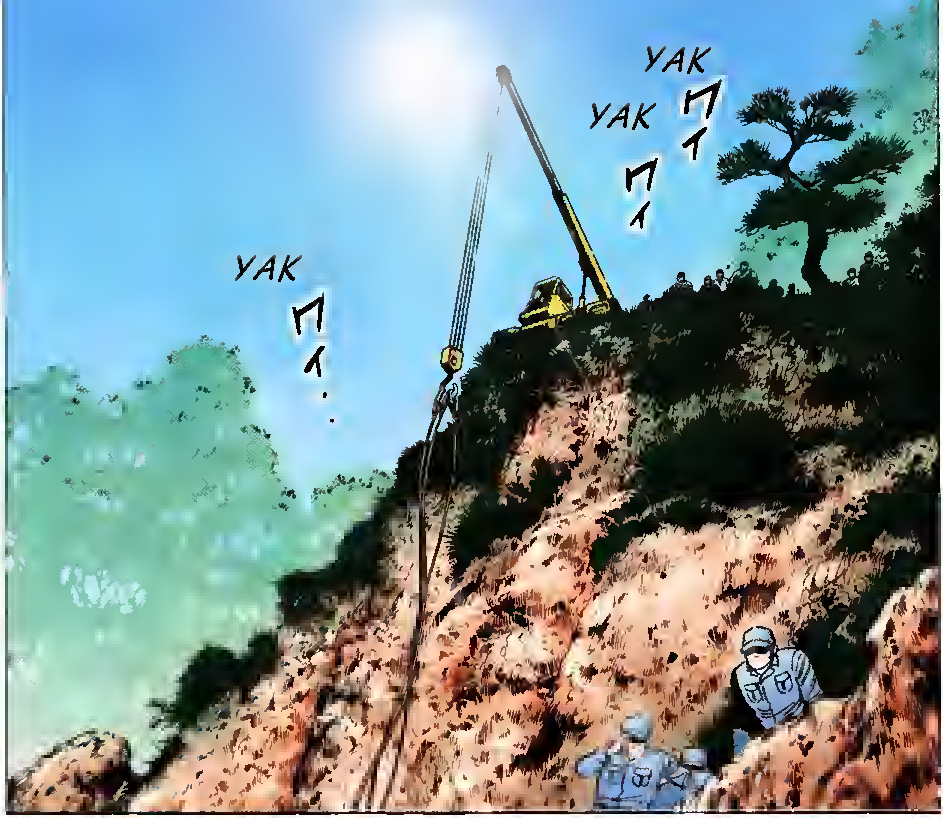
ROKUDA NOBORU
清酒
出羽桜
いなり食堂
VOL.18
SON OF GOD

F

VOL.18
SON OF GOD

Chapter 1: Dead or Alive
Chapter 2: Bird Legs
Chapter 3: Edge of a Dream
Chapter 4: Impatience
Chapter 5: Waves
Chapter 6: Happy New Year
Chapter 7: The Blueprint
Chapter 8: The Hourglass
Chapter 9: Back on Track
Chapter 10: Son of God
Chapter 11: The Promise
Chapter 12: The Board Meeting

Chapter 1:
Dead or Alive


YAK
YAK
YAK

All right!
Bring it up!

KREEK
GRRRR

KACHUK
SCREECH
BROOOOH
!!

赤木商事
笠井取締役 情死!?
Akagi Group Exec.
Mr. Kasai involved in
apparent double suicide
若き美人秘書（豊田有里さん20）
with young,
attractive secretary
(Yuri Toyota, Age 20)
老いらくの恋の果てか!?
Forbidden love
gone too far?
茨城県豊浦岸壁
でのダイビング!!
Deadly plunge off
steep cliff
in Toyoura,
Ibaraki Prefecture

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Forbidden love
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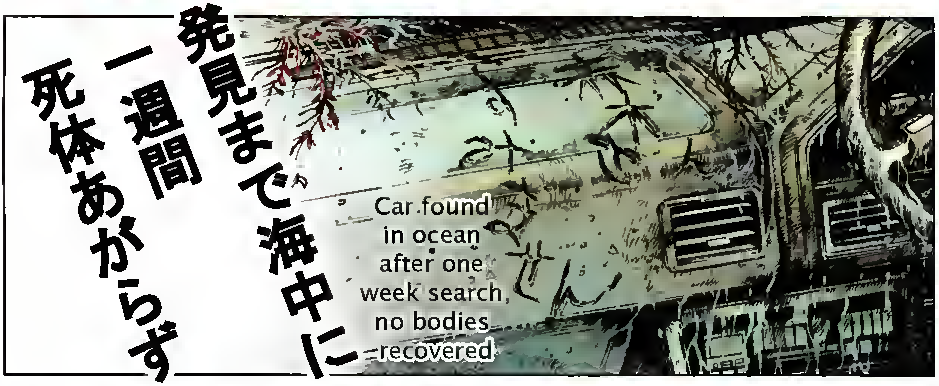
老いらくの恋の果てか!?

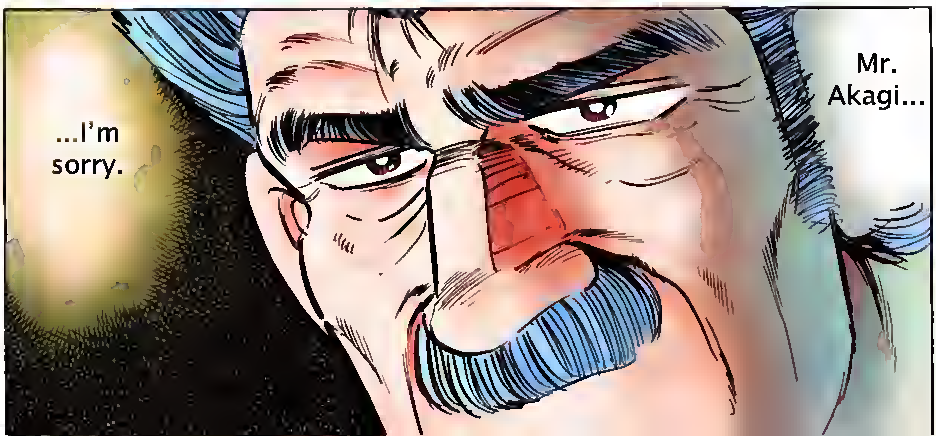
Ka...

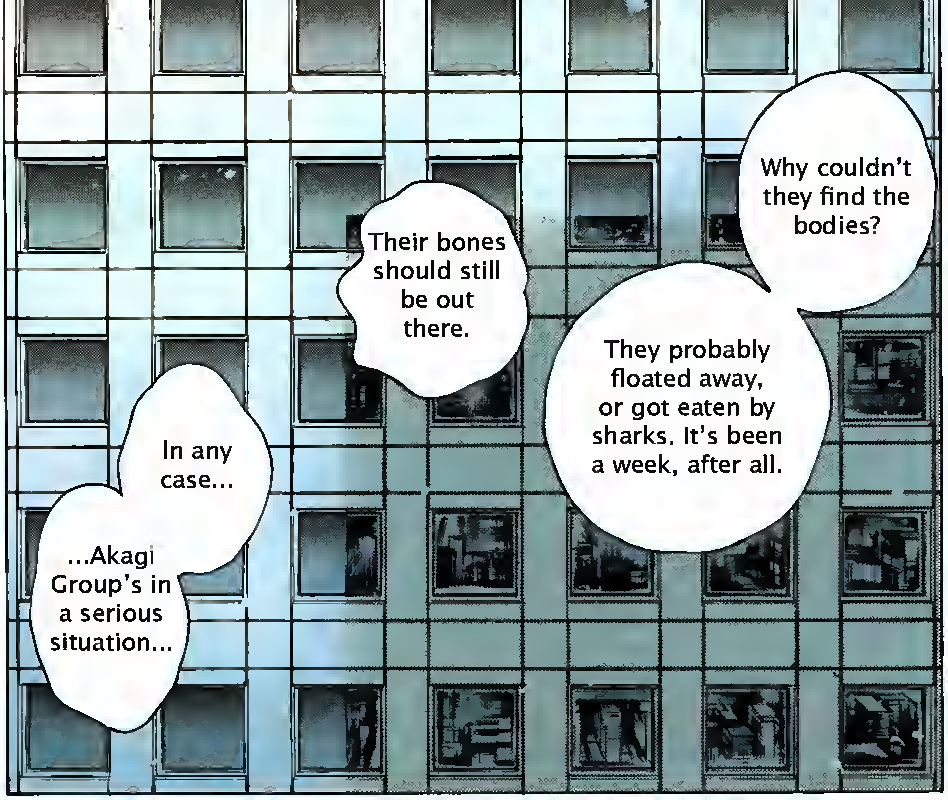
Kasai ...

Out of the way!



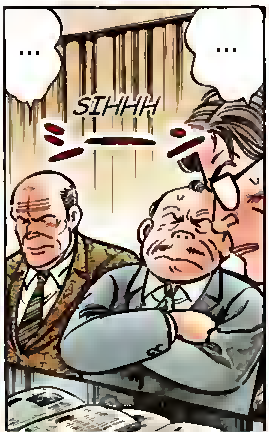
Mr. Akagi,
I'm sorry

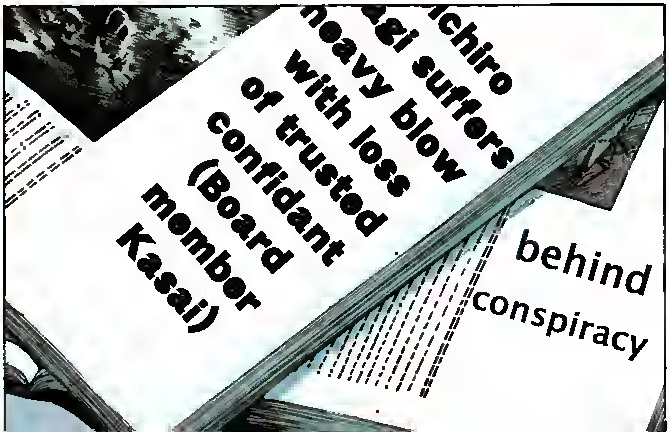

...I'm
sorry.
Mr.
Akagi...


Why couldn't they find the bodies?
Their bones should still be out there.
They probably floated away, or got eaten by sharks. It's been a week, after all.
In any case...
...Akagi Group's in a serious situation...

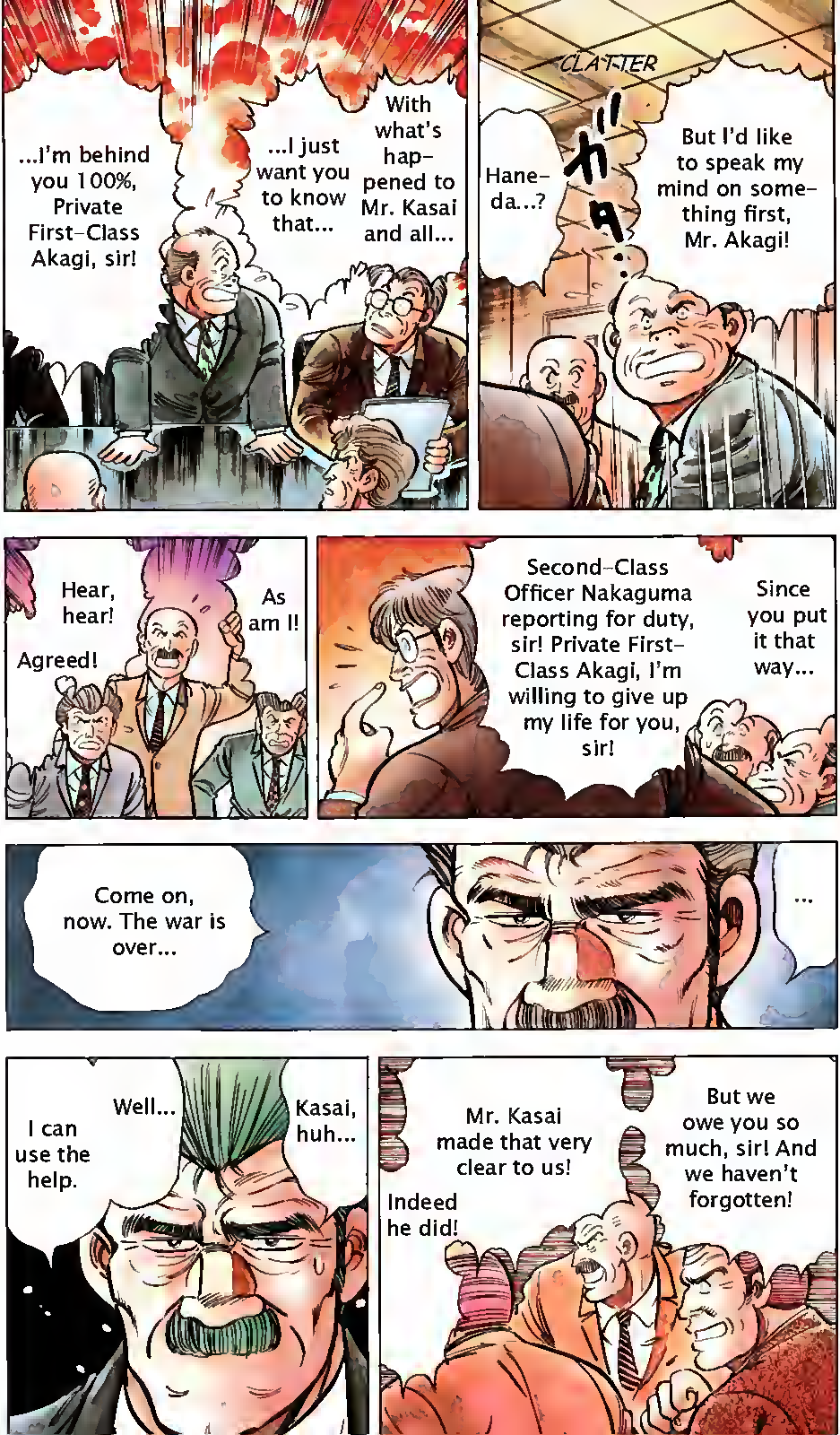
Possible conspiracy behind Akagi Group's relocation plan!
But look at this article.

A double suicide does seem plausible.
...and now those damn magazines are writing irresponsible drivel about us!

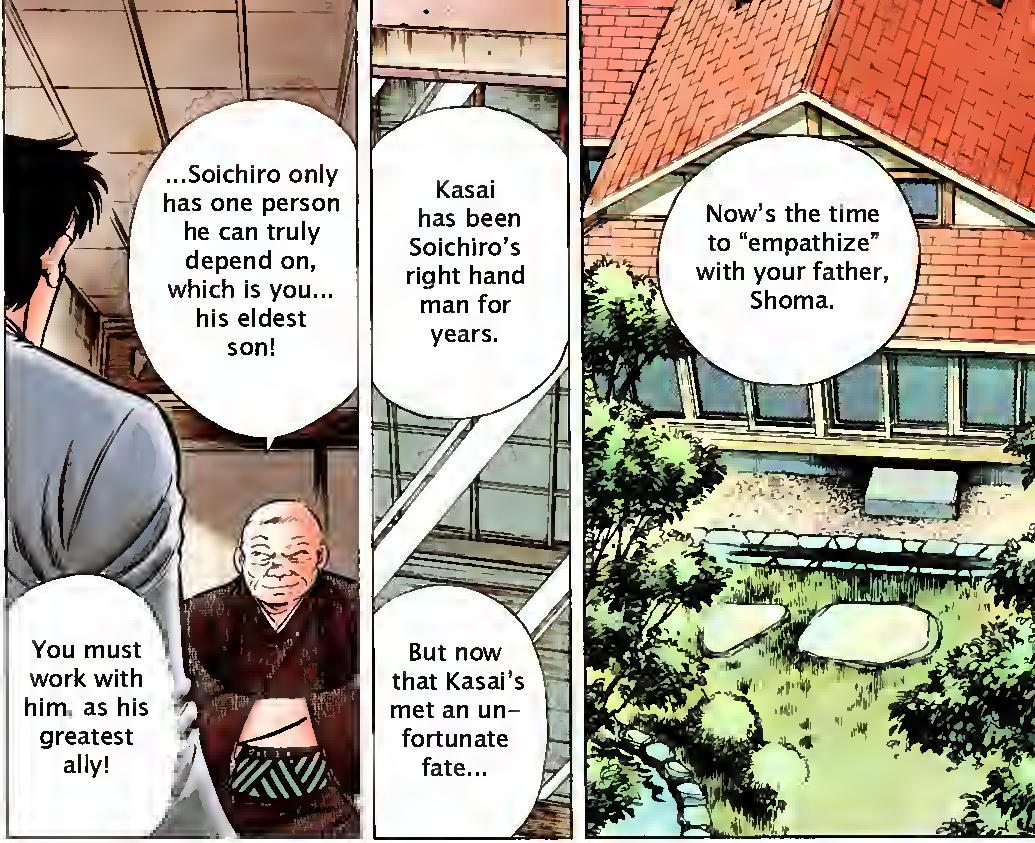

...
...
SIHHH

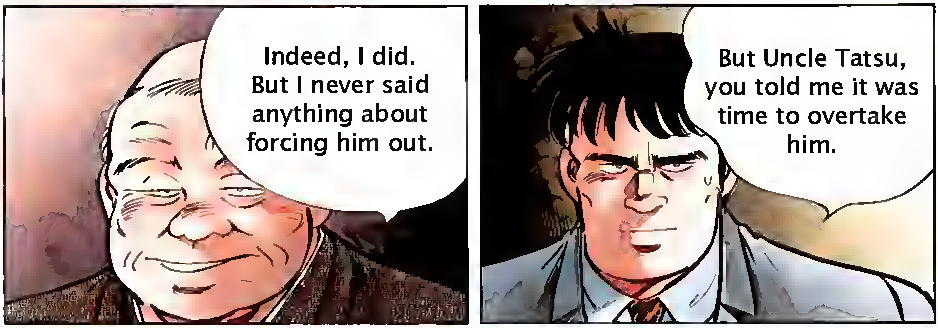

ichiro
Agi suffers
heavy blow
with loss
of trusted
confidant
(Board
member
Kasai)
behind
conspiracy

TUNK
TUNK
TUNK
SHHH
Hey...
KACHIK
TUNK
SIHHH
Why not...
We'd like to hold an emergency board meeting. Is that all right?
We uh...
TUNK

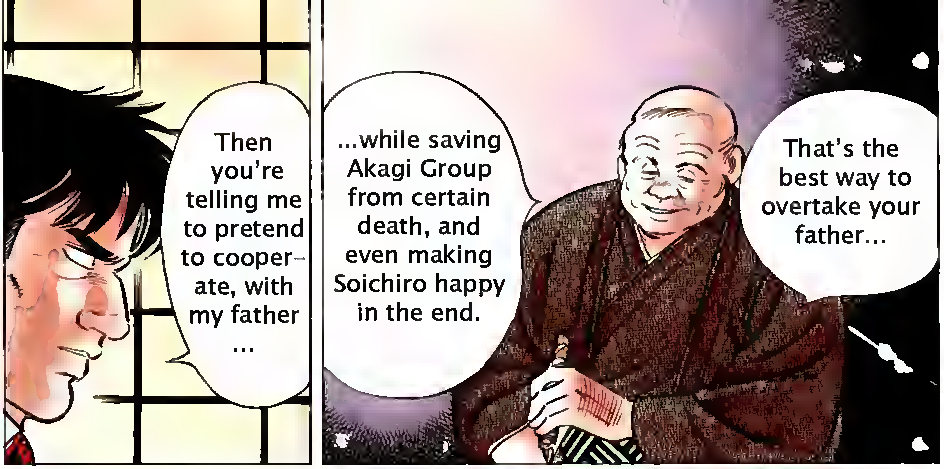

...I'm behind you 100%, Private First-Class Akagi, sir!
...I just want you to know that...
With what's happened to Mr. Kasai and all...
CLATTER
Hane-da...?
ガ!
But I'd like to speak my mind on something first, Mr. Akagi!
Hear, hear!
As am I!
Agreed!
Second-Class Officer Nakaguma reporting for duty, sir! Private First-Class Akagi, I'm willing to give up my life for you, sir!
Since you put it that way...
Come on, now. The war is over...
...
Well...
I can use the help.
Kasai, huh...
Mr. Kasai made that very clear to us!
Indeed he did!
But we owe you so much, sir! And we haven't forgotten!

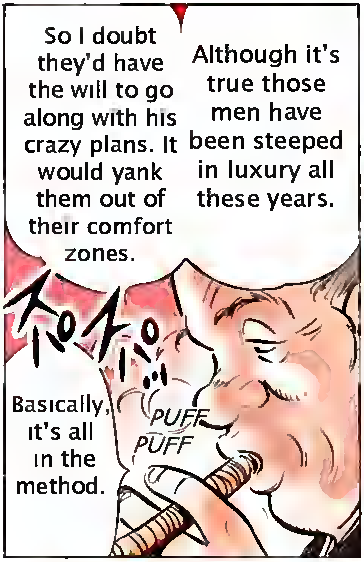
GLARE
He didn't have any relatives to speak of, so I thought we could hold one for him.
I'm wondering about Mr. Kasai's funeral arrangements.
...NOT!
Absolutely...
THUD
...still alive!
Kasai is...
I know he's alive!
...
...


...Soichiro only has one person he can truly depend on, which is you... his eldest son!
You must work with him, as his greatest ally!
Kasai has been Soichiro's right hand man for years.
But now that Kasai's met an unfortunate fate...
Now's the time to "empathize" with your father, Shoma.

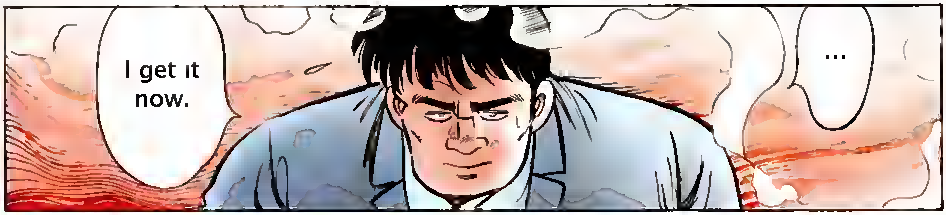

Indeed, I did. But I never said anything about forcing him out.
But Uncle Tatsu, you told me it was time to overtake him.

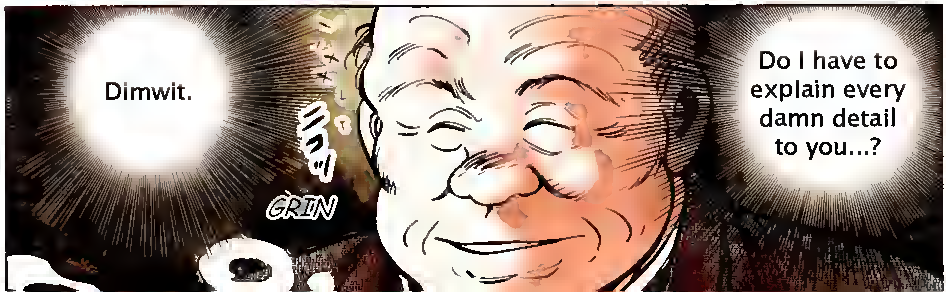
Then you'll be next in line for the presidency!
And to do that, we need to prevent Soichiro's plans from materializing.
What I'm saying is for you to save Akagi Group.

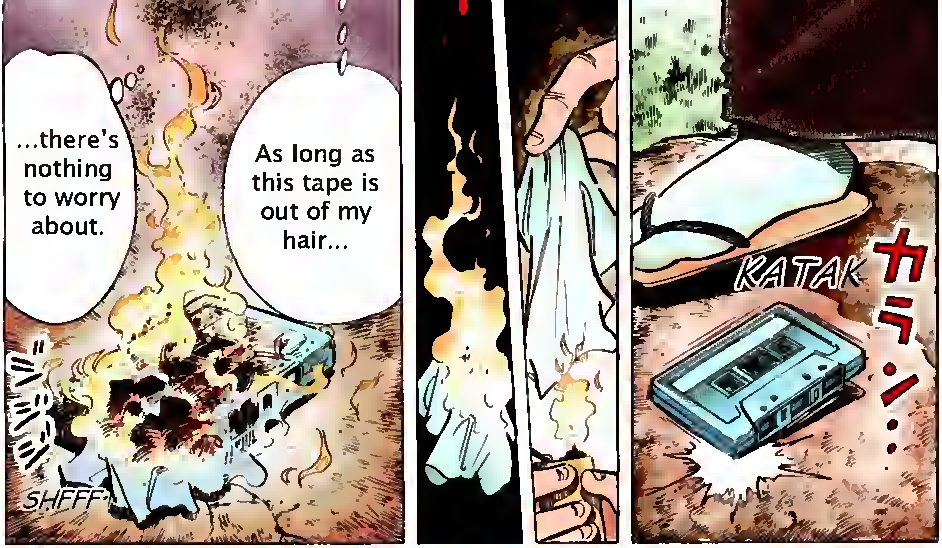

Then you're telling me to pretend to cooperate, with my father ...
...while saving Akagi Group from certain death, and even making Soichiro happy in the end.
That's the best way to overtake your father...

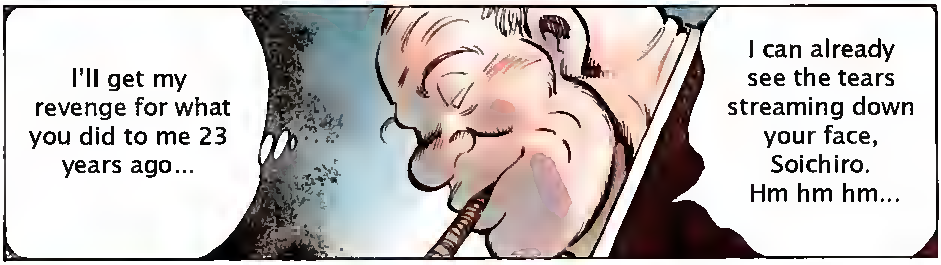

So I doubt they'd have the will to go along with his crazy plans. It would yank them out of their comfort zones.
Although it's true those men have been steeped in luxury all these years.
Basically, it's all in the method.
PUFF
PUFF

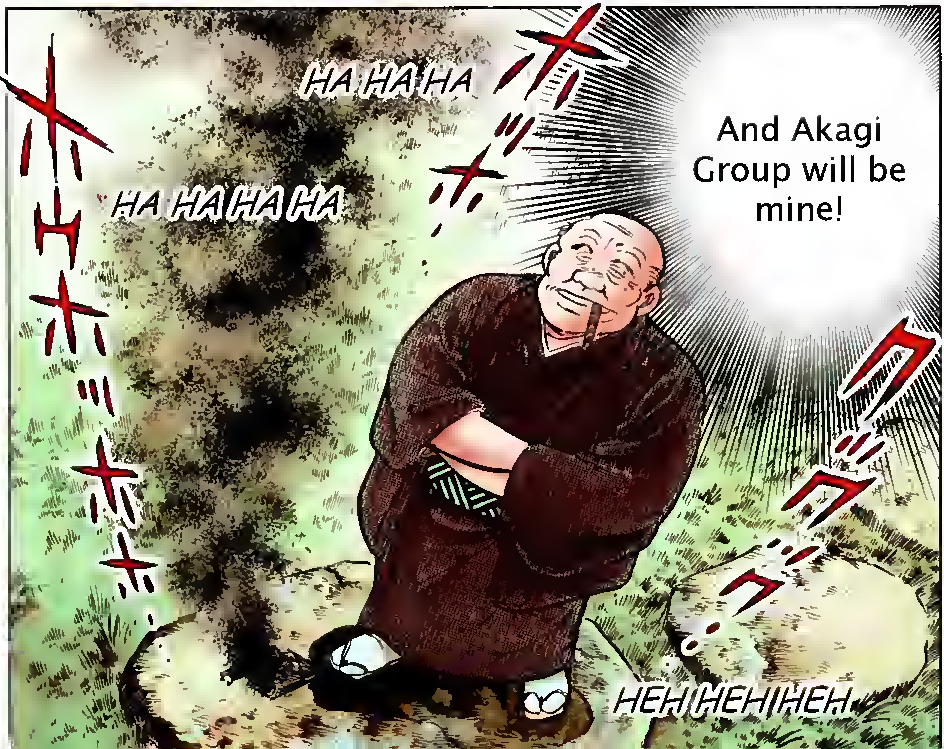
The Akagi Head Office board of directors are all his war buddies, and that's a tough bond to break!
If we go about this wrong, the board could very well turn against us.
SHIK
SHIK

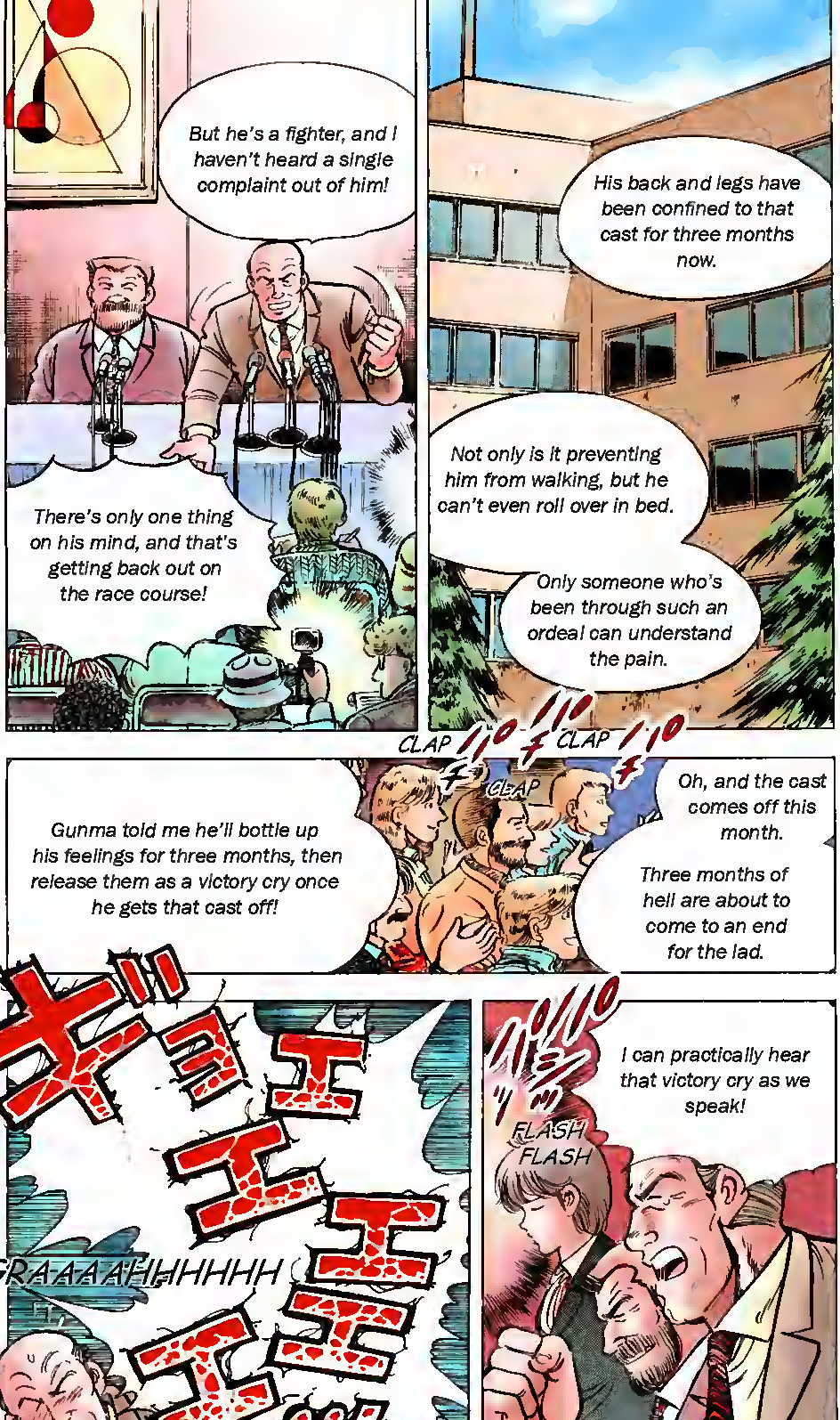

I get it now.
...

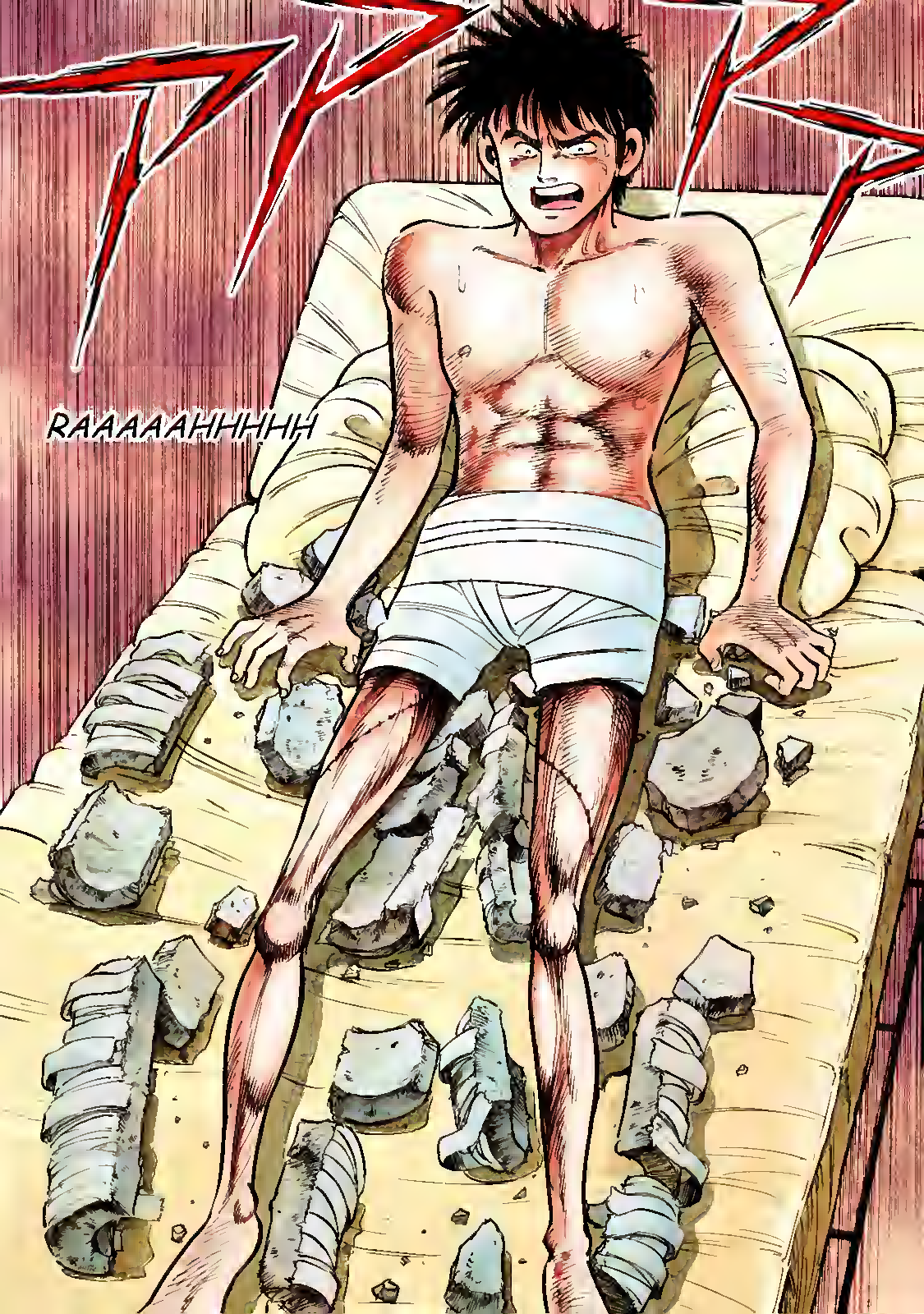

Dimwit.
GRIN
Do I have to explain every damn detail to you...?


...there's nothing to worry about.
As long as this tape is out of my hair...
SHFFF
KATAK
カラ・・・

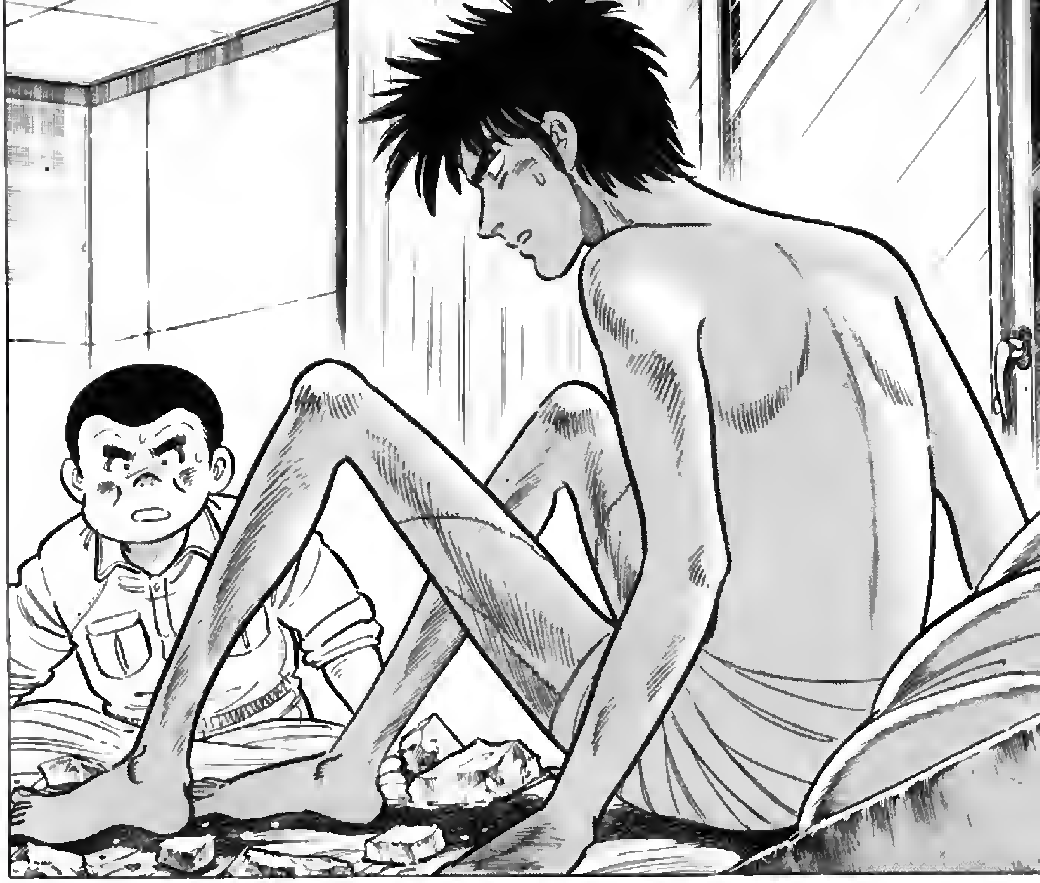

I'll get my revenge for what you did to me 23 years ago...
I can already see the tears streaming down your face, Soichiro. Hm hm hm...

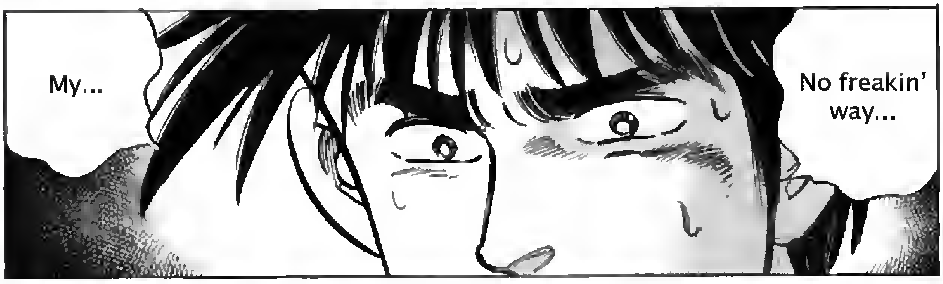

HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA
And Akagi Group will be mine!
HEH HEH HEH


But he's a fighter, and I haven't heard a single complaint out of him!
There's only one thing on his mind, and that's getting back out on the race course!
His back and legs have been confined to that cast for three months now.
Not only is it preventing him from walking, but he can't even roll over in bed.
Only someone who's been through such an ordeal can understand the pain.
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
Gunma told me he'll bottle up his feelings for three months, then release them as a victory cry once he gets that cast off!
Oh, and the cast comes off this month.
Three months of hell are about to come to an end for the lad.
GRAAAAHHHHHH
I can practically hear that victory cry as we speak!
FLASH
FLASH

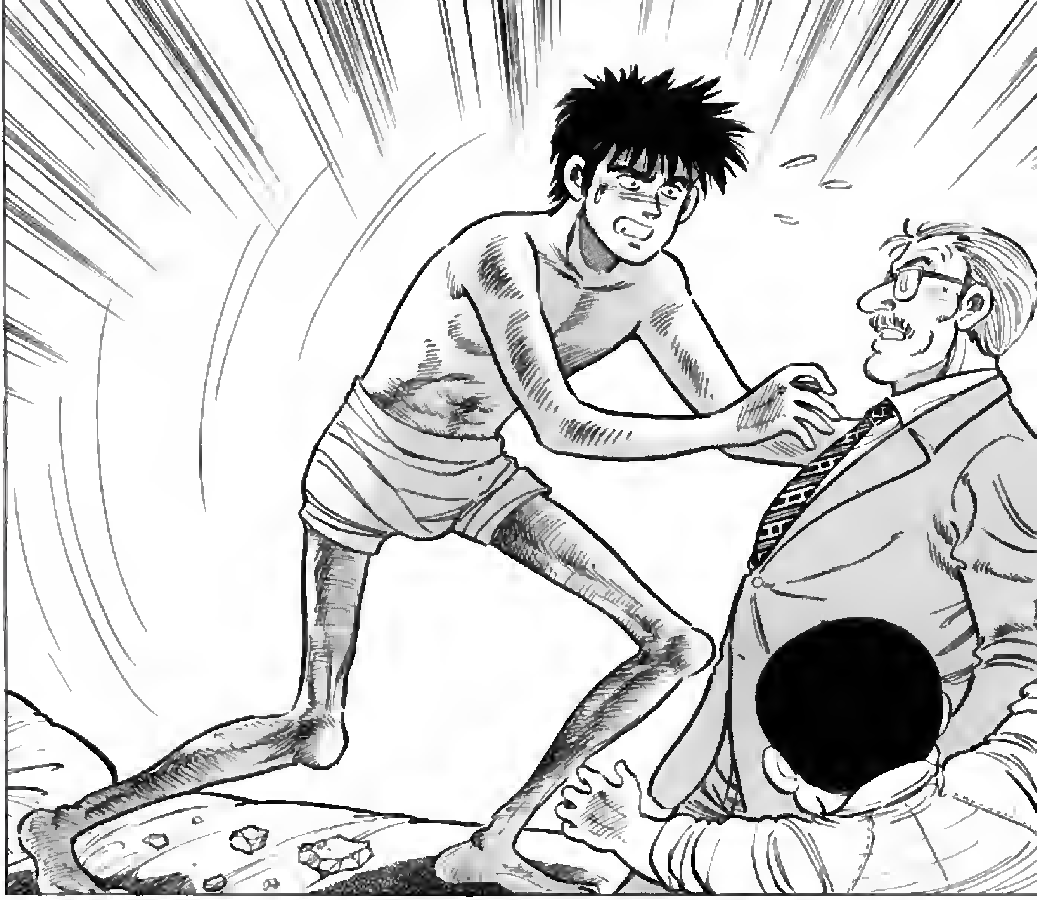

RAAAAAHHHHH

Chapter 2: Bird Legs

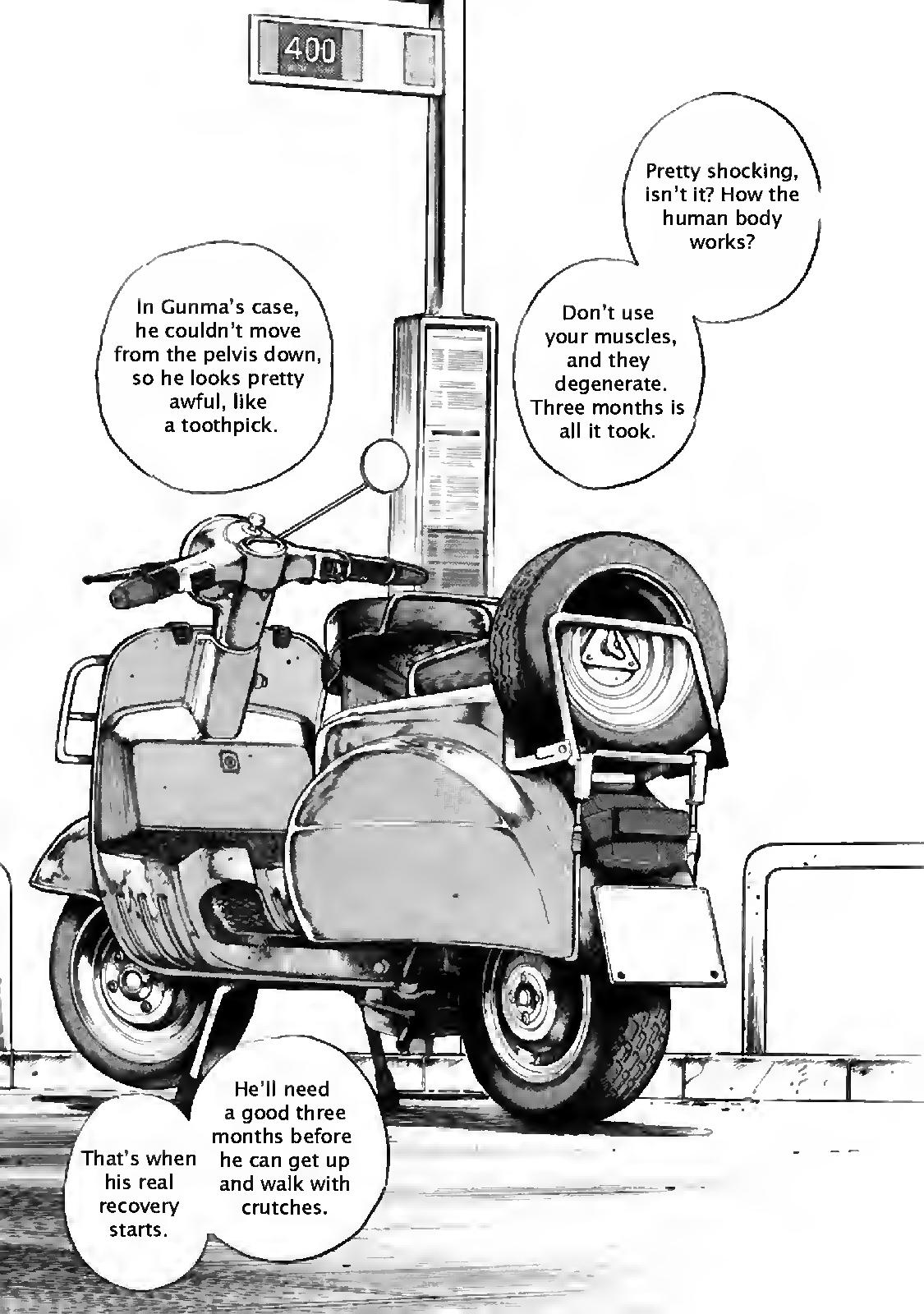


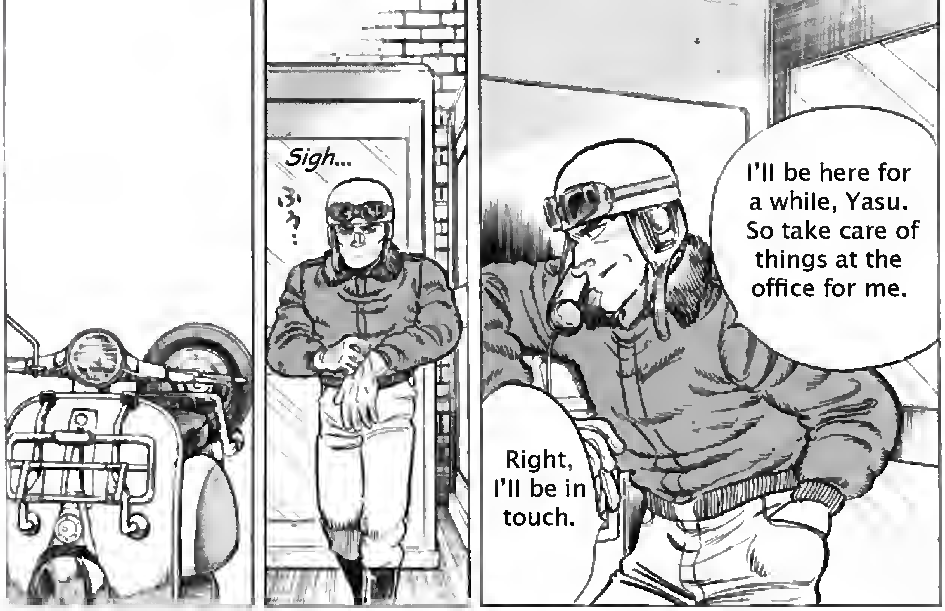

My...
No freakin' way...

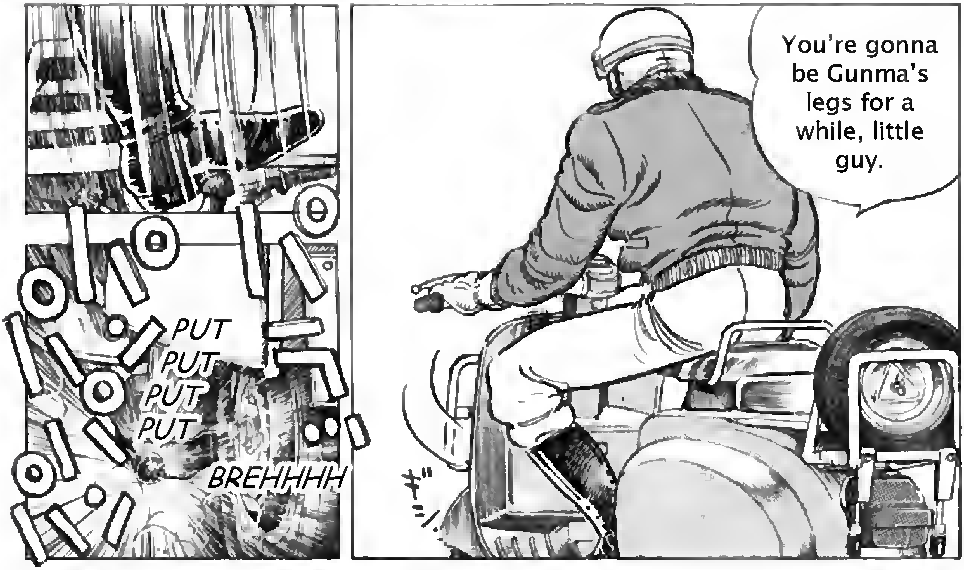
OH!
Gun-ma...
My legs...
What hap-pened to my legs!?
I can see why you'd be surprised, you've been virtually immobile for three months, and your muscles have degenerated.
You're in good health, and your legs will be just fine!
But it's nothing to be con-cerned about. Once you're back on a nutritious diet, and get started in rehab, you'll be back to normal in no time.
SLAM
Damn you... You stupid quack!



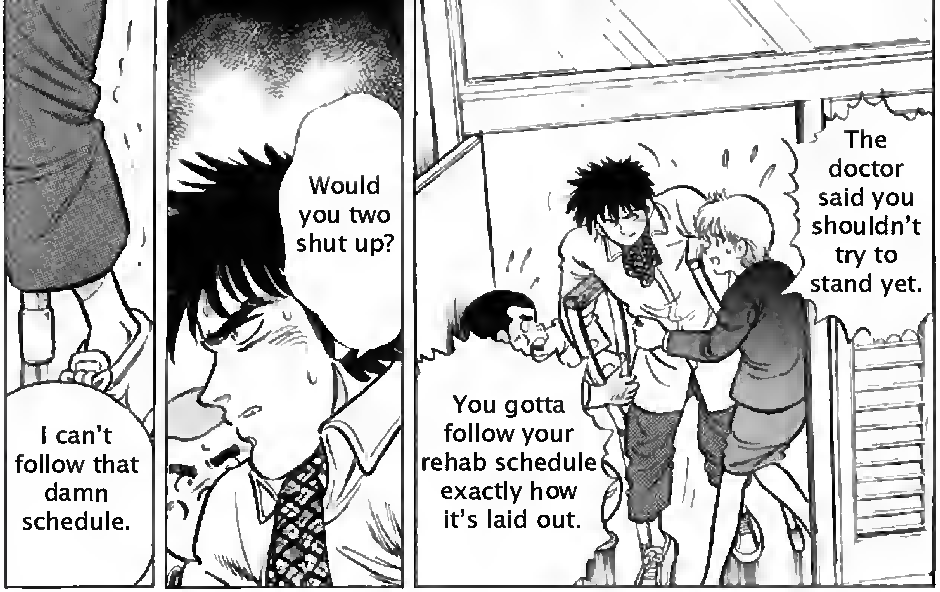
Gunma!
THUNK
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
WOBBLE


400
Pretty shocking, isn't it? How the human body works?
Don't use your muscles, and they degenerate. Three months is all it took.
In Gunma's case, he couldn't move from the pelvis down, so he looks pretty awful, like a toothpick.
He'll need a good three months before he can get up and walk with crutches.
That's when his real recovery starts.


Sigh...
ふう…
I'll be here for a while, Yasu. So take care of things at the office for me.
Right, I'll be in touch.


PUT
PUT
PUT
PUT
BREHHHH
You're gonna be Gunma's legs for a while, little guy.

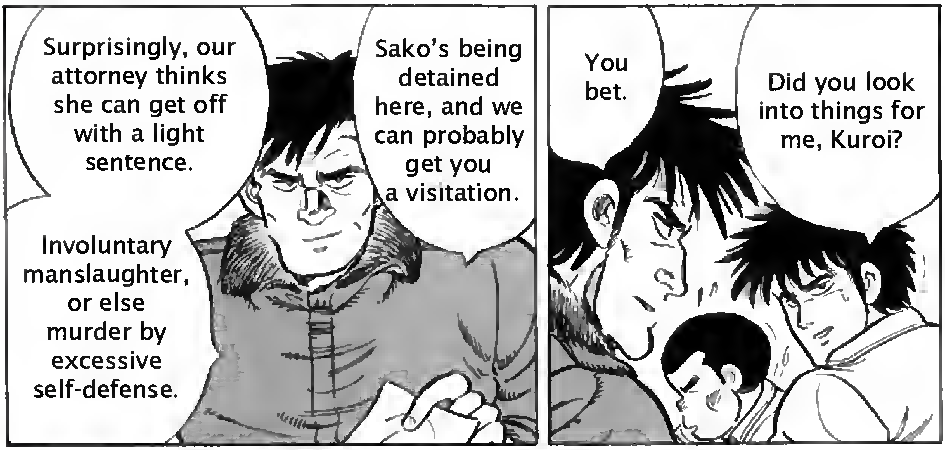
That's enough, Gunma!
Don't overdo it!


I can't follow that damn schedule.
Would you two shut up?
You gotta follow your rehab schedule exactly how it's laid out.
The doctor said you shouldn't try to stand yet.

Ugh ...
Where are you going!?
Besides, I got some place to go.

Look after him, Tamotsu.
I will.
Damn these bird legs...

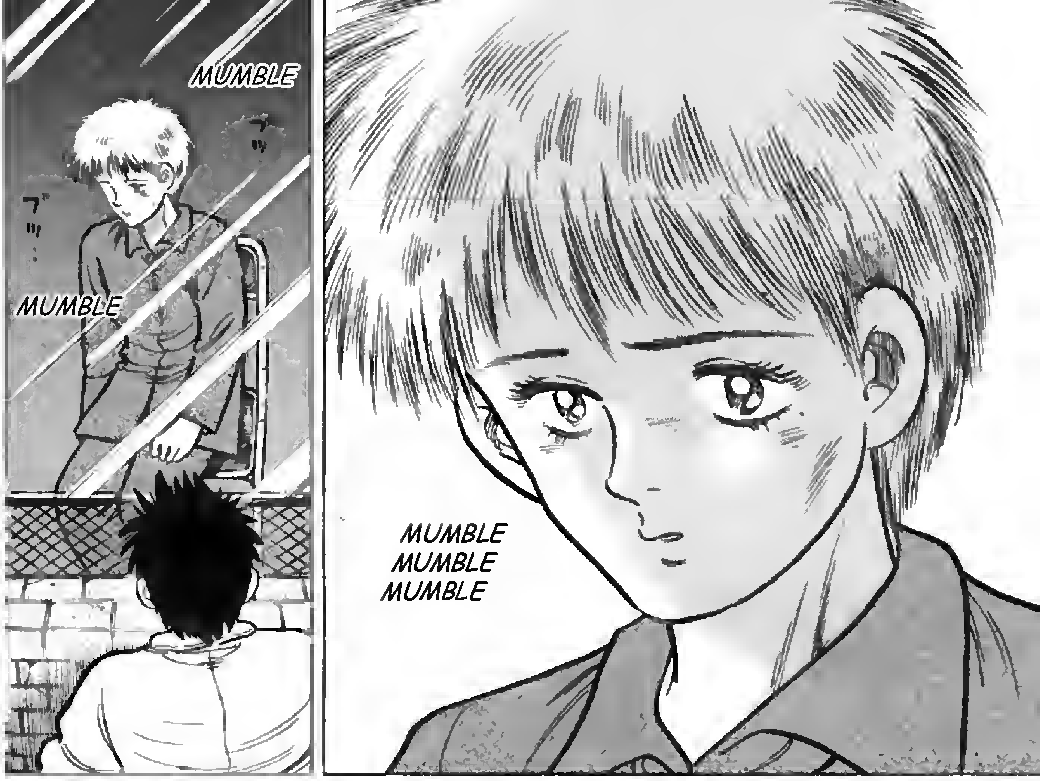
Fire it up, Tamotsu.
Look at you walkin' already. You're a tough one.
But you can't kick start this thing with your legs like that.
Ahh... Ow ow ow...

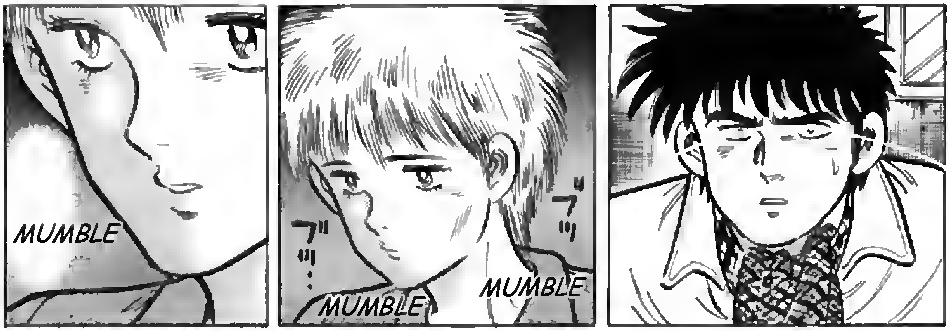

Surprisingly, our attorney thinks she can get off with a light sentence.
Involuntary manslaughter, or else murder by excessive self-defense.
Sako's being detained here, and we can probably get you a visitation.
You bet.
Did you look into things for me, Kuroi?

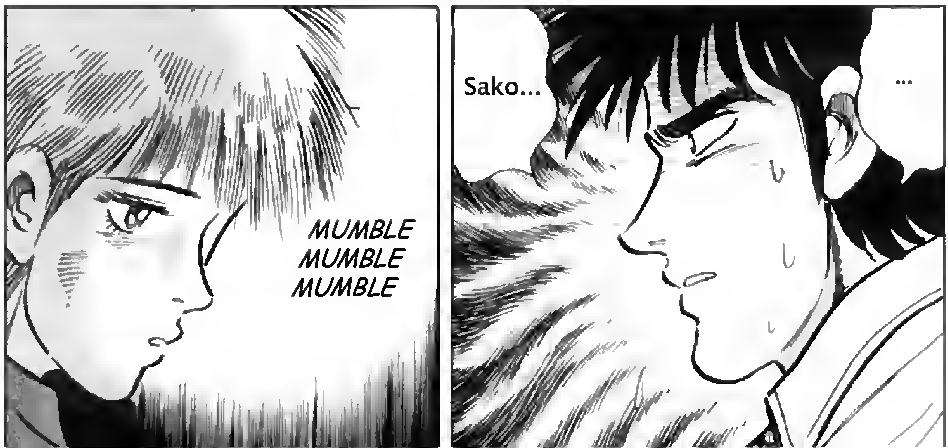
But there's one thing that's a bit unsettling.

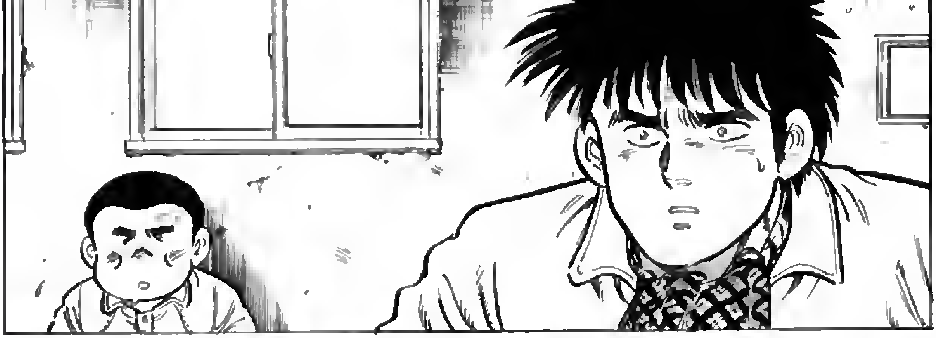
...
Unsett-ling?

KACHANG
What did he mean by unsettling?
Guess he wants me to find out for myself.

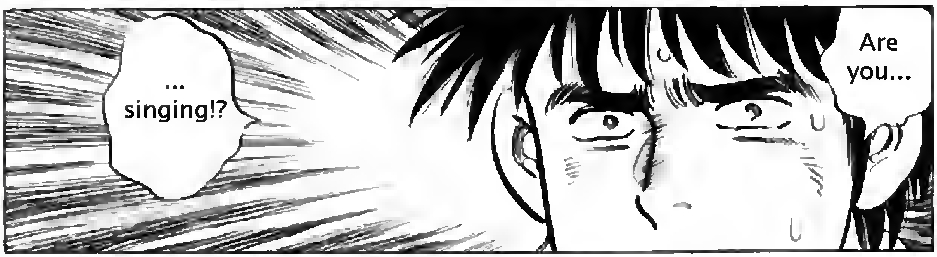

MUMBLE
ブ"
ブ"…
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
MUMBLE

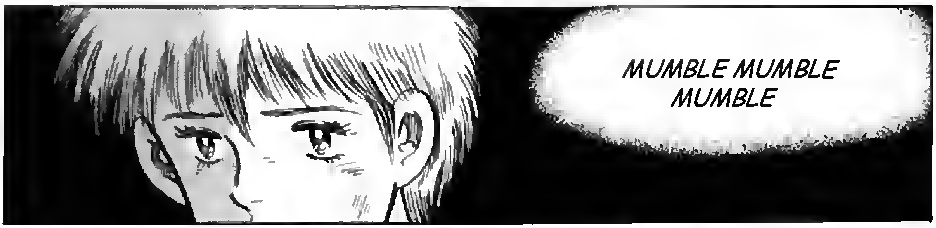

MUMBLE
ブ"
ブ"…
MUMBLE
MUMBLE

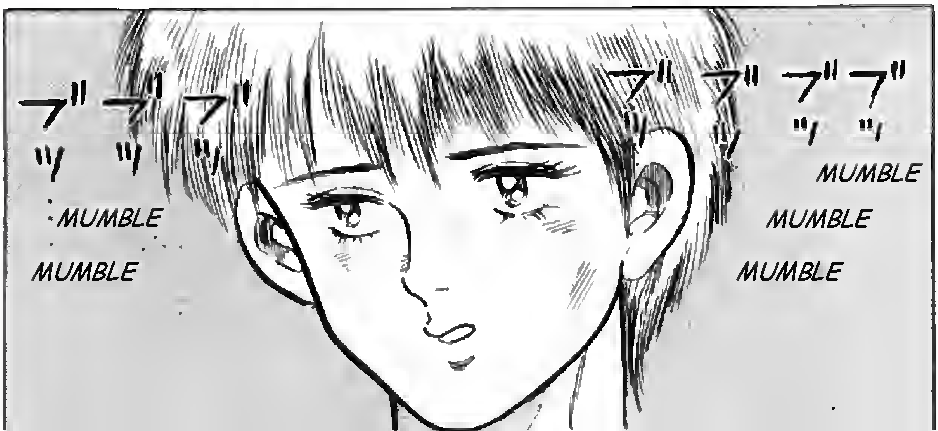

MUMBLE
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
Sako...
...



MUMBLE MUMBLE
MUMBLE


...
singing!?
Are
you...


MUMBLE MUMBLE
MUMBLE


MUMBLE
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
MUMBLE

Time passes on, and this town has changed
I don't know many people here
Rolling along like a pebble
I've waited too long for you like this
So long that if we ever meet again
You may not notice me anymore

I didn't think I'd ever see you again
so I became so desperate
and found myself with many lovers
My heart was thrown into misery by them
And I'm a different person now
I tried to swim with the flow but I couldn't
All I can do now is pray
That you never find me again

Time flows on, time flows on
And I'm a different person now
In the flow now, all I can do is pray
Now that I've changed so much
I pray you never find me

I didn't think I'd ever see you again
so I became so desperate
and found myself with many lovers
My heart was thrown into misery
but I'd be more miserable searching for you

I heard so many rumors about your lovers
And my heart was set at ease by them
If I'm the only one who changed
And you never changed a bit
I'd feel like a lonely tomorrow is coming

I tried to find love with another man
who's so much better than you
I don't care what others think or say
I'll just enjoy life in the moment
Drinking my problems away
I won't think about tomorrow
My heart is sober, and I'm living another day
That's how life is

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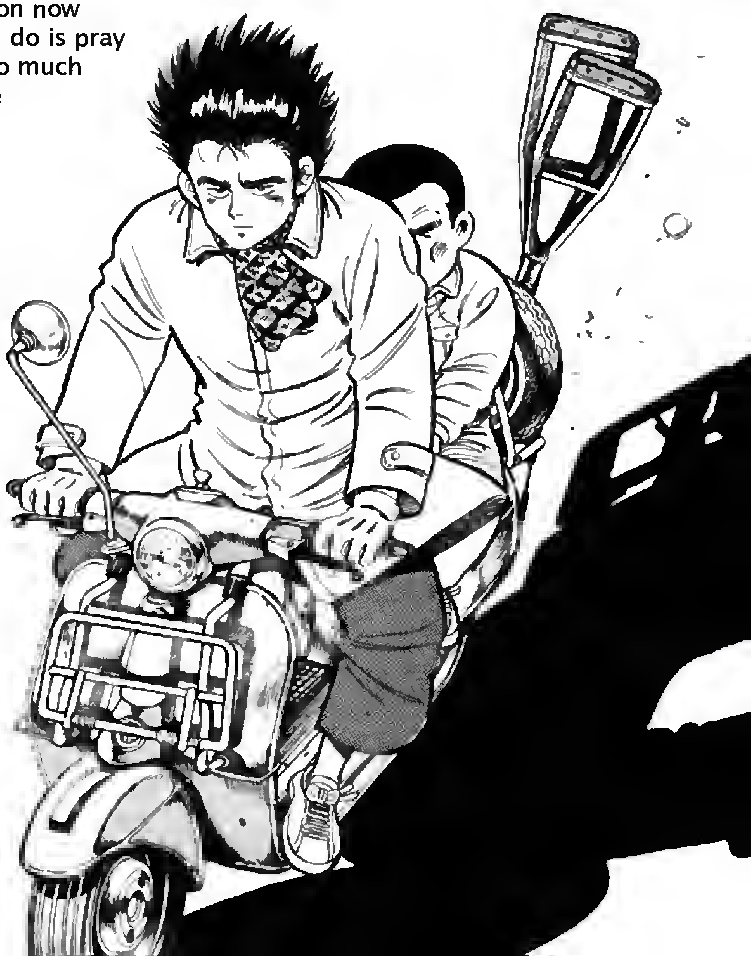
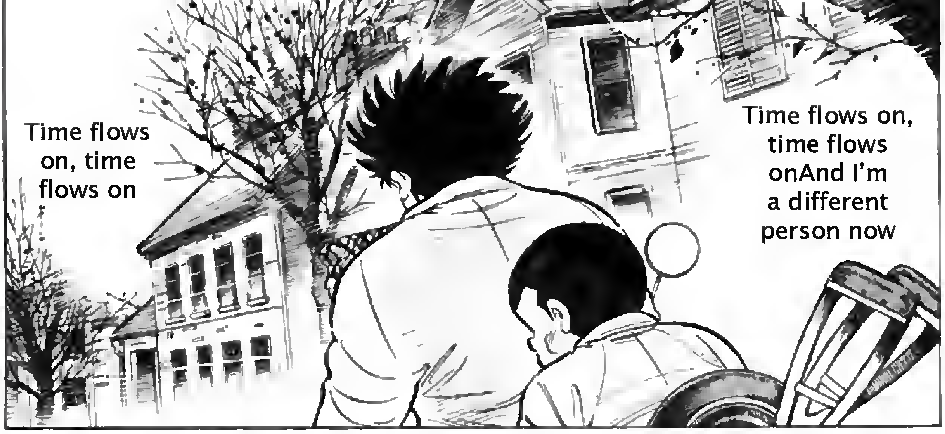
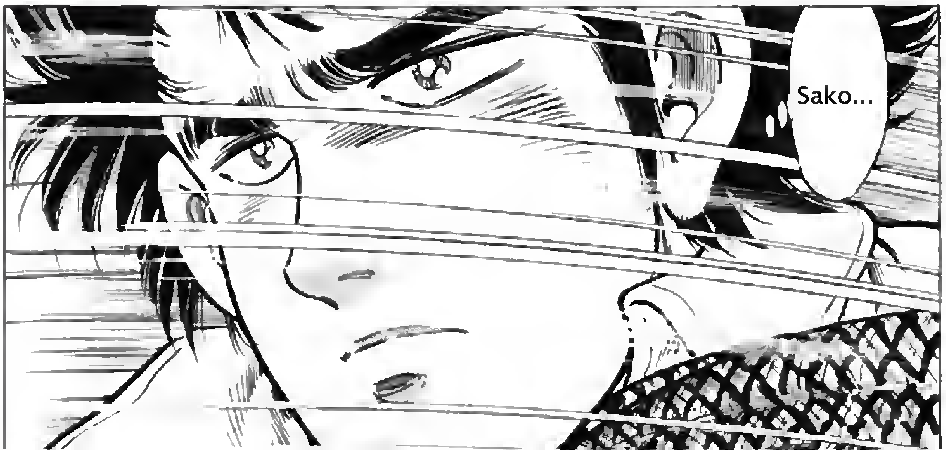
I pray you never find me

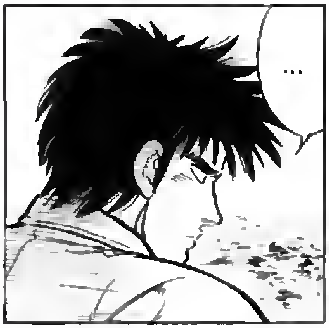


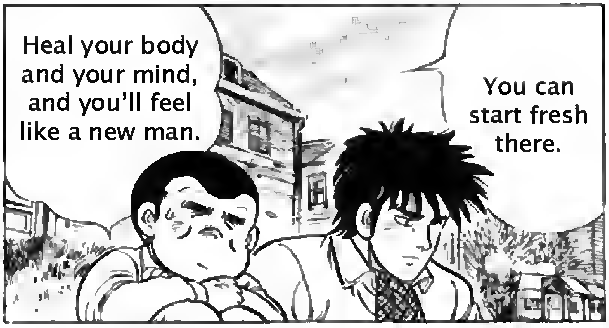


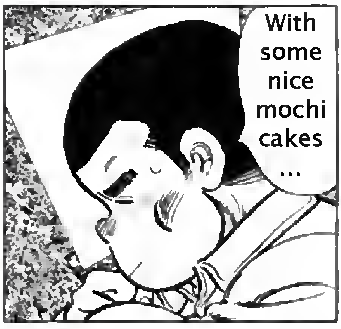


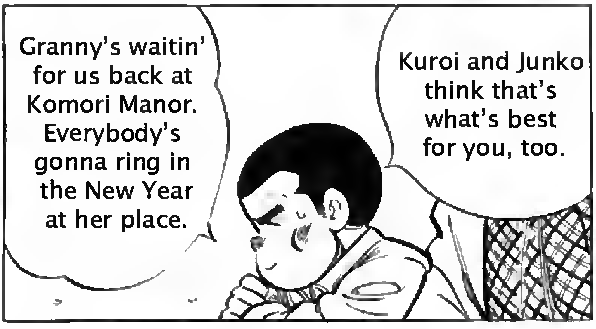
Miyuki Nakajima "Tokiwa nagarete"

Let's go back to Japan, Gunma.


...

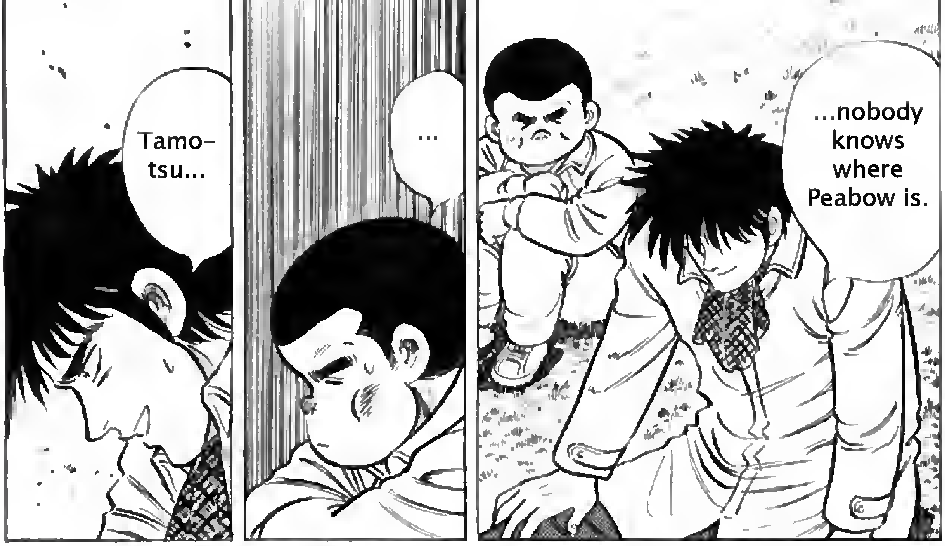

Heal your body and your mind, and you'll feel like a new man.
You can start fresh there.


With some nice mochi cakes ...


Granny's waitin' for us back at Komori Manor. Everybody's gonna ring in the New Year at her place.
Kuroi and Junko think that's what's best for you, too.

Be-sides ...
I can't leave Sako behind.

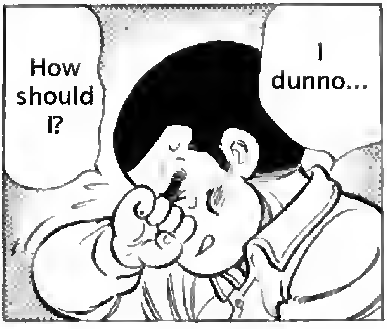
Gun-ma...
I ain't goin' nowhere.
If you wanna go back, then go.

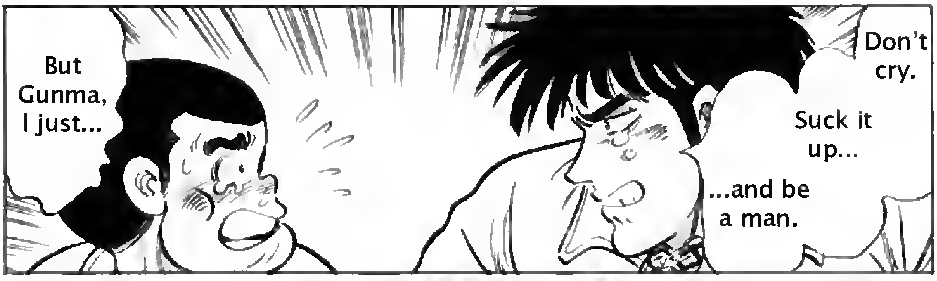

Tamo-
tsu...
...
...nobody
knows
where
Peabow is.

Havin'
a dream...
...is damn good
thing, but it can
make life real
cruel at the same
time.
But heck...
I figure life ain't
worth livin' if
you ain't got
a dream.
Why do
I feel that
way?

...start gettin' so obsessed with dreams?
Huh? Since when did people...
And since when?

Sayin' all them things... You got me all choked up.
You jerk...

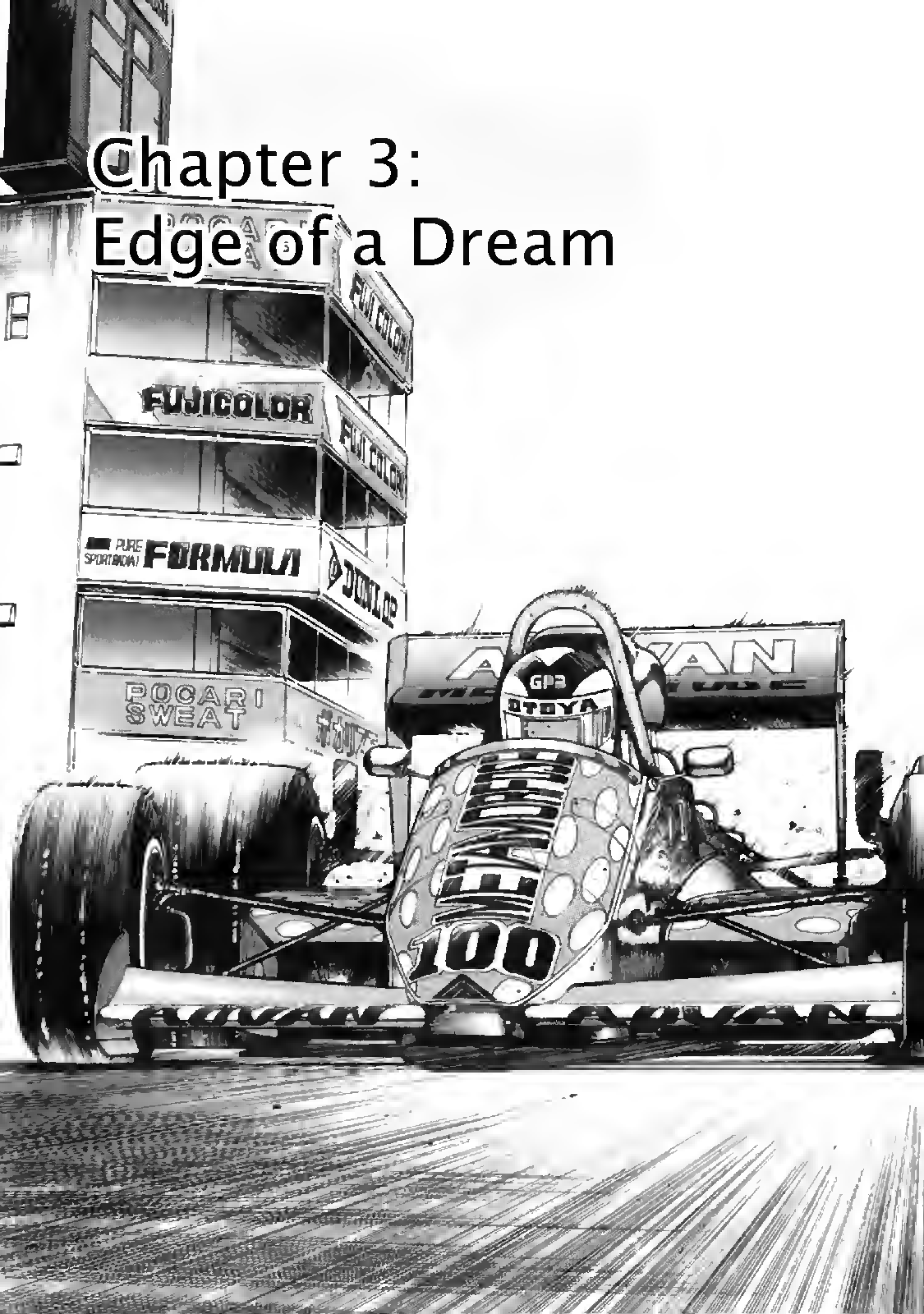

How should I?
I dunno...

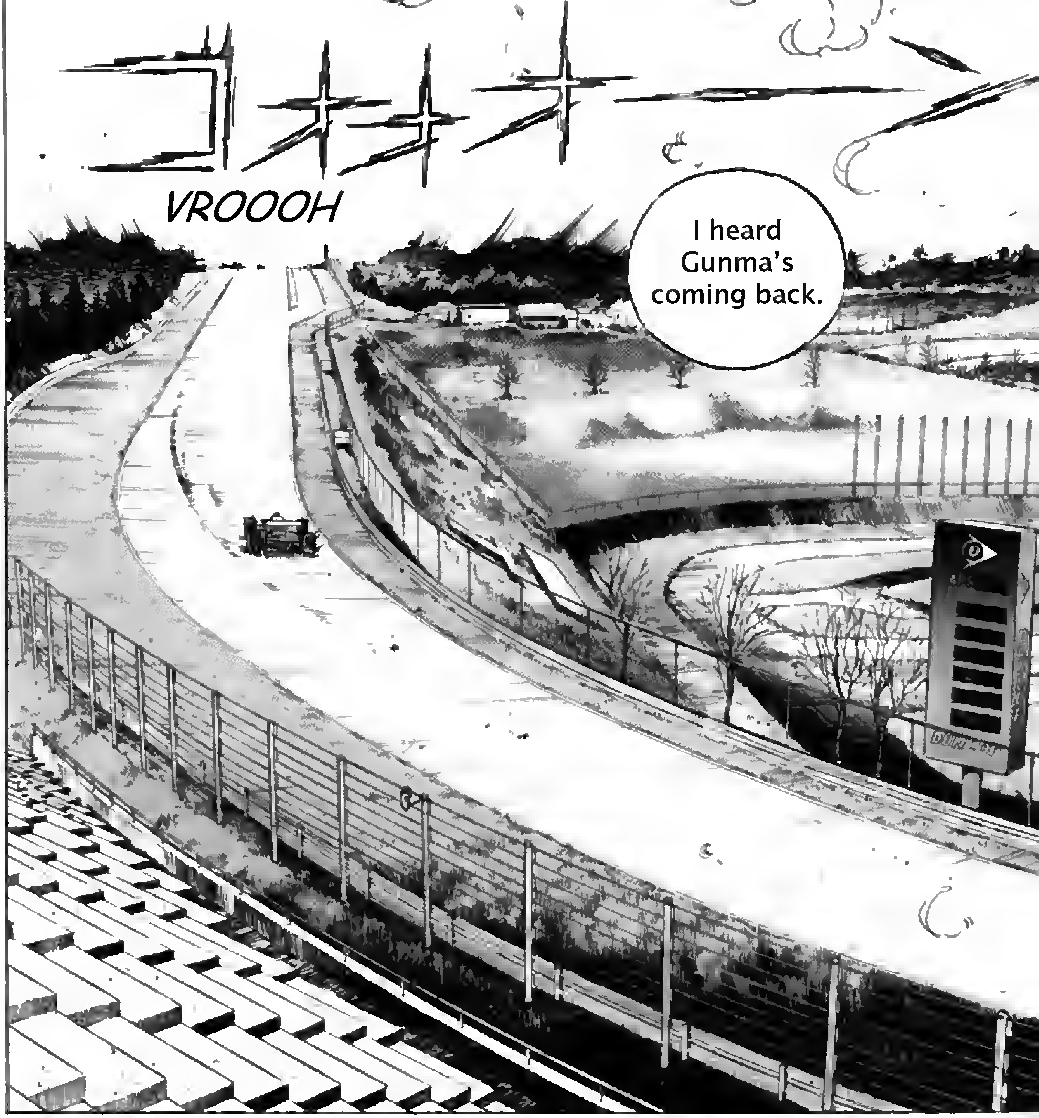

But Gunma, I just...
Don't cry.
Suck it up...
...and be a man.

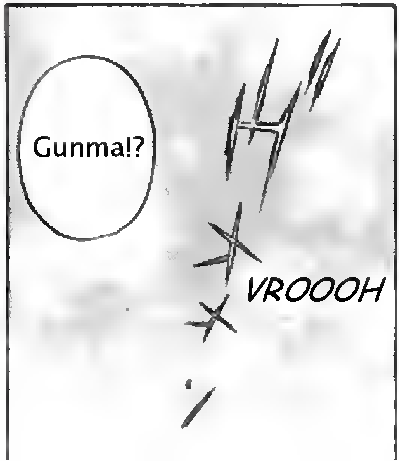
Guhuh
Wuhuh...
Wuh...
Ung...
Wuhuh...

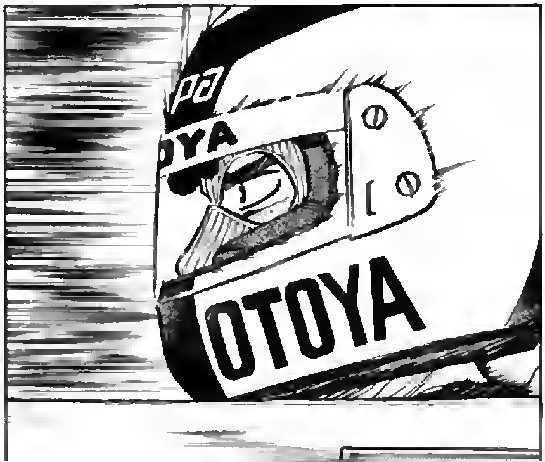
Two weeks later,
Sako was deported back
to Japan.

Chapter 3:
Edge of a Dream



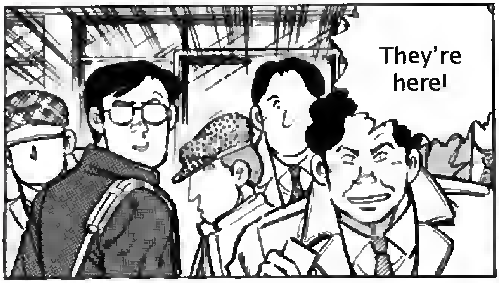

VROOOH
I heard Gunma's coming back.

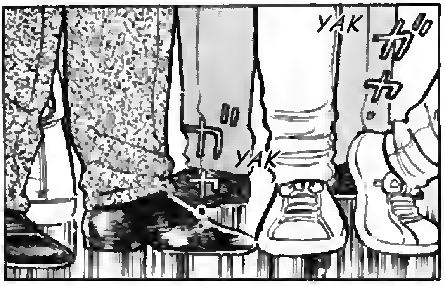

Gunma!?
VROOOH


OTOYA

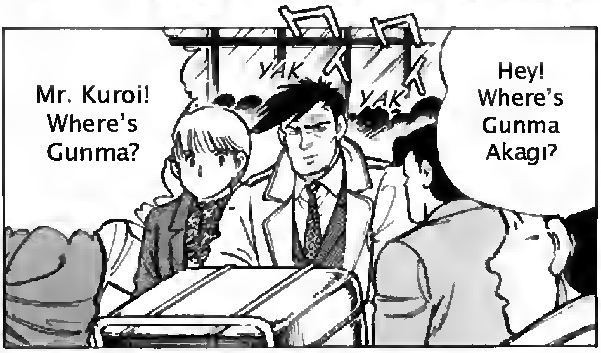
Think I'll pass.
How about you?
Okay ...
Yeah, I'd like to.
Are you going to see him?
It's too bad he had that accident in Birmingham. If it wasn't for that, he'd probably be series champ.
I wonder if he's fully recovered yet.
What do you want me to say exactly?
...really going to see Gunma, please give him my best.
If you're ...
...
...is a changed man.
Tell him that Otoya Yamaguchi...

Narita Airport


They're here!

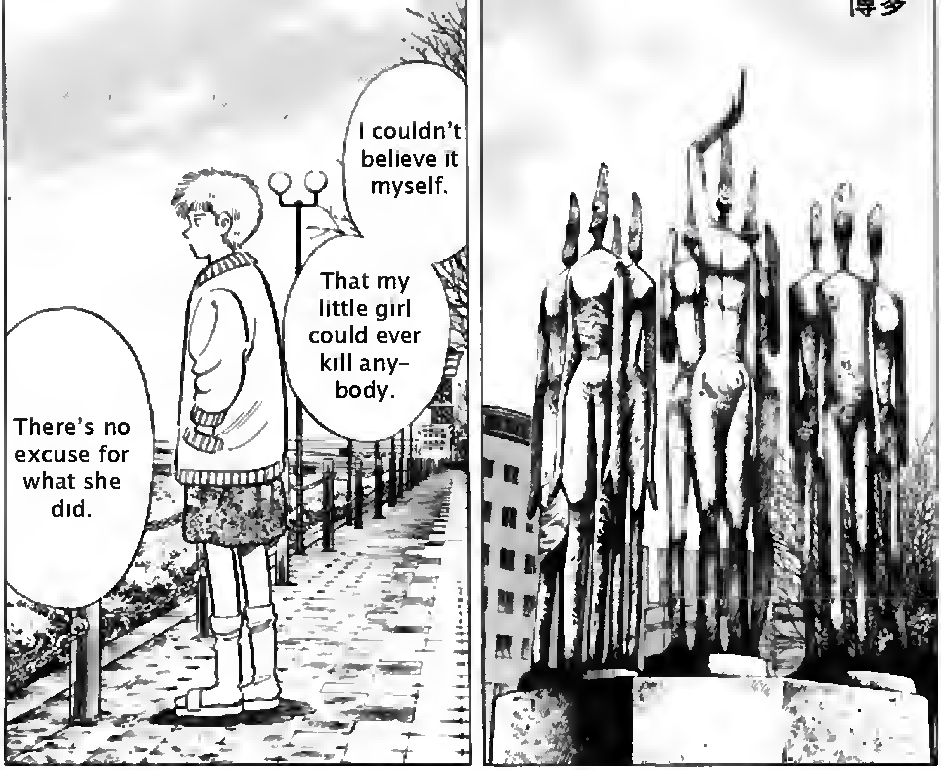

YAK
YAK

Come on! Where's Gunma!?
Let us through.


Mr. Kuroi! Where's Gunma?
YAK
YAK
Hey! Where's Gunma Akagi?

Tell us where!
Come on, Mr. Kuroi!
Seems he had some-where else to go first.
YAK
YAK
YAK

A separate flight!? What's that all about?
Gunma didn't travel with us. He went on a separate flight.


I couldn't believe it myself.
That my little girl could ever kill anybody.
There's no excuse for what she did.
博多

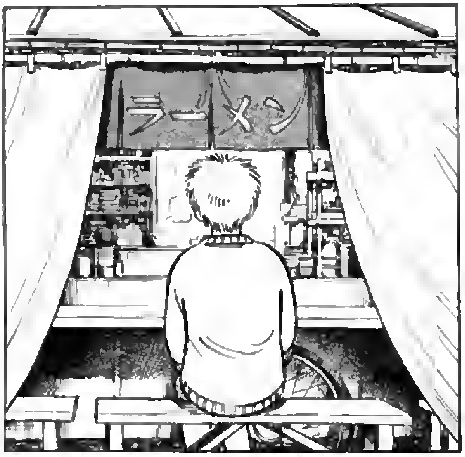
She doesn't say anything. Just been starin' into space like that since she got back a week ago.
And I can't believe those folks over there forgave her for such a crime.

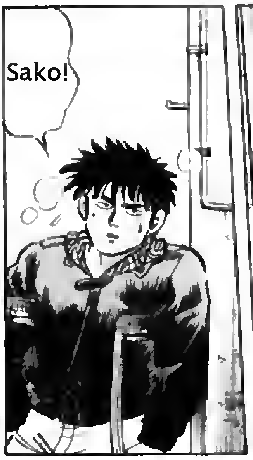
Just stares at the river like that, day after day.
Till the sun sets.
I wonder what she thinks about.
She's a different person now.

I just don't know what to think anymore.
Some-thing's not right with her since the incident ...
She's always been a dreamer.
Ran away from home, with her head full of dreams.
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
Gunma... Your legs still ain't...
Gunma...
Just stay back!
But...
Don't follow me, Tamotsu.
Don't you recognize me?
It's me.
What the hell happened to you, girl?
Hey Sako...
Wait up.

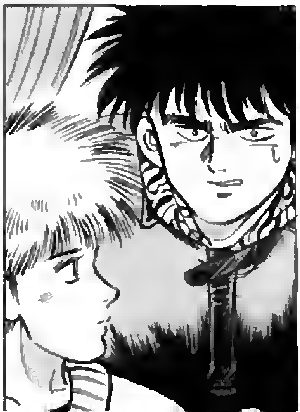
Go back to the old Sako.
Come on...
...you gotta remember me.

I can see why this whole thing's got you messed up.
But... I mean ...

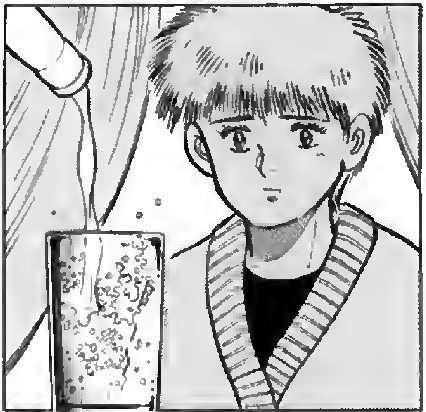

ラーメン


Sako!

Damn bird legs...
Come on.



PLUNK



I don't know nobody by that name!
...Gun ma.
It's me...
Who're you?
No alcohol for you.
Hey, aren't you Sako!?
Yer a weird one... What are you doin'?
You talked. You finally said some-thin'...
It IS Sako! Man, it's been ages, girl!
I heard you went out to Tokyo. What happened?
And who's this guy?
It's just like old times! When'ja get back?
Hey, Kenbo and Toku! My bass and my drums!

You better lay off, dude!
Sako...
I don't know him. He's been followin' me around like a creep...
He yer boy-friend ?
Kick his ass, Toku!
Who do you think you are, callin' her "Sako"?
She's havin' some issues...
So you guys are...
...Sako's old buddies, right?
KA
BLAM
...my ass...?
Kick...
PLUNK
Ha! He's out like a light!
お酒 八ちゃん
Boom! Knock out!
CLATTER

Those were the days, huh?
We were really hot back then!
I work a day job now, but we still jam every now and again.
You still in a band?
What about you, Sako? Were you singin' in Tokyo?
Man, it's been years since we've seen you.
I think you got skinny.
But still pretty as ever!

You don't remember nothin'!?
All of a sudden, I'm walkin' along the Naka River...
I can't remember...
...my head's kinda cloudy.

It's best to forget!
It's like I did a whole lot of things, but at the same time, I feel like I didn't do nothin'.
Ha ha ha! That's a trip!
I told you, up to now it's all really fuzzy...

Real-ly!?
We just got off work, and we practice in a warehouse right over there.
The band!
What do you mean?
Maybe there's some kinda cosmic reason we met up today. What do you say we rock it up like old times?
Did you just get dumped?
Who are you, anyway?
Let's jam, Sako!
Just like old times, I wanna hear that sweet voice of yours!
...you could say that.
Well...
...
I'll sing for you.
Why don't you come with us, then?

BWEHHHHHNG
...reached the edge her dream.
I think Sako's...

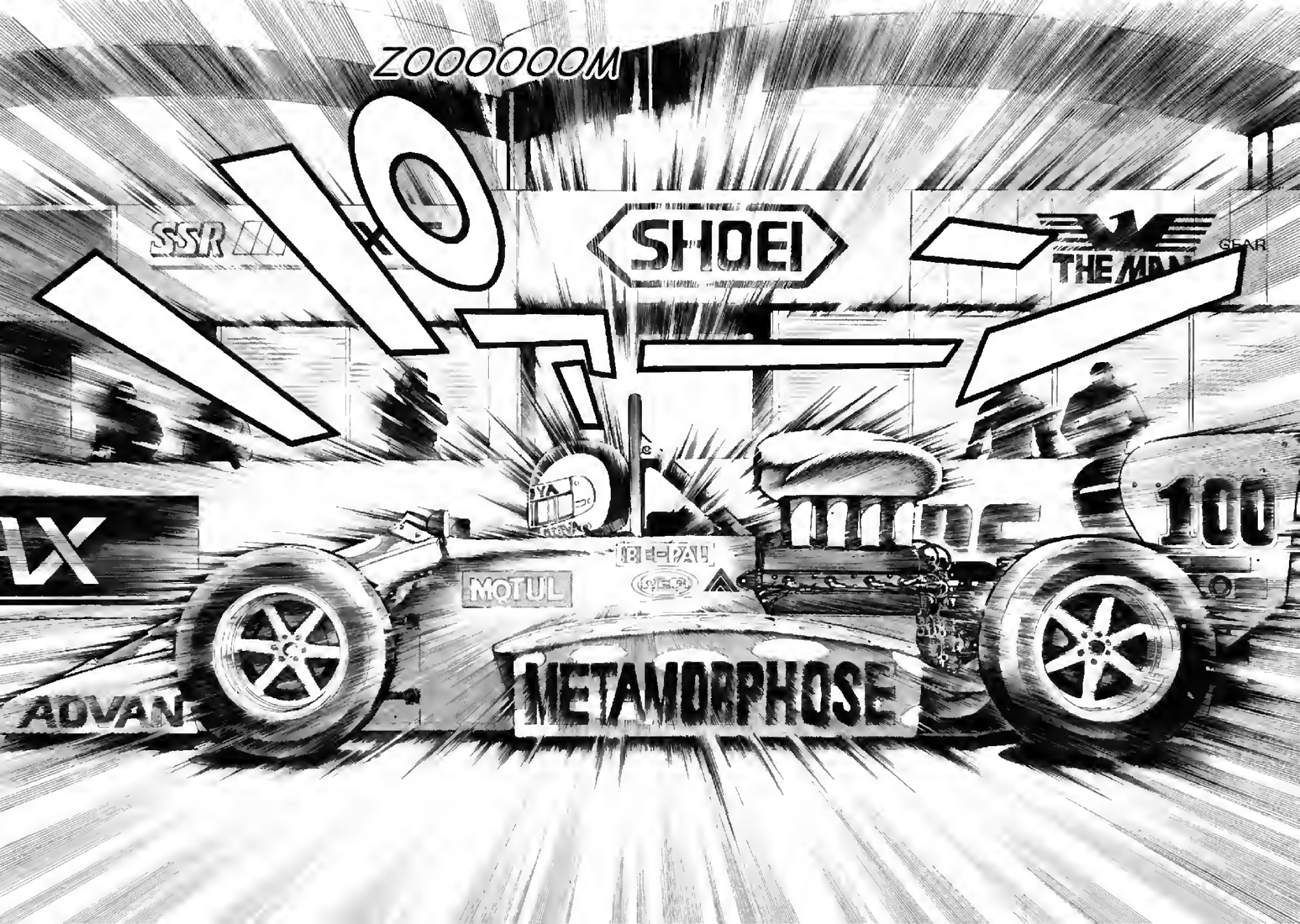
They're playin' again.
CLOP
CLOP
...she ain't never coming back.
And...
WOO HOO
But the beat's more intense tonight!
When are you guys goin' pro!?
I think I'm in love...
Rock and roll!
That new girl's hot!
Sako...
WHISTLE
WHISTLE

BZZ
BZZ
TING
BZZ
BZZ
BZZ BZZ
TING
BZZ
BZZ
Snack
Dream
TING

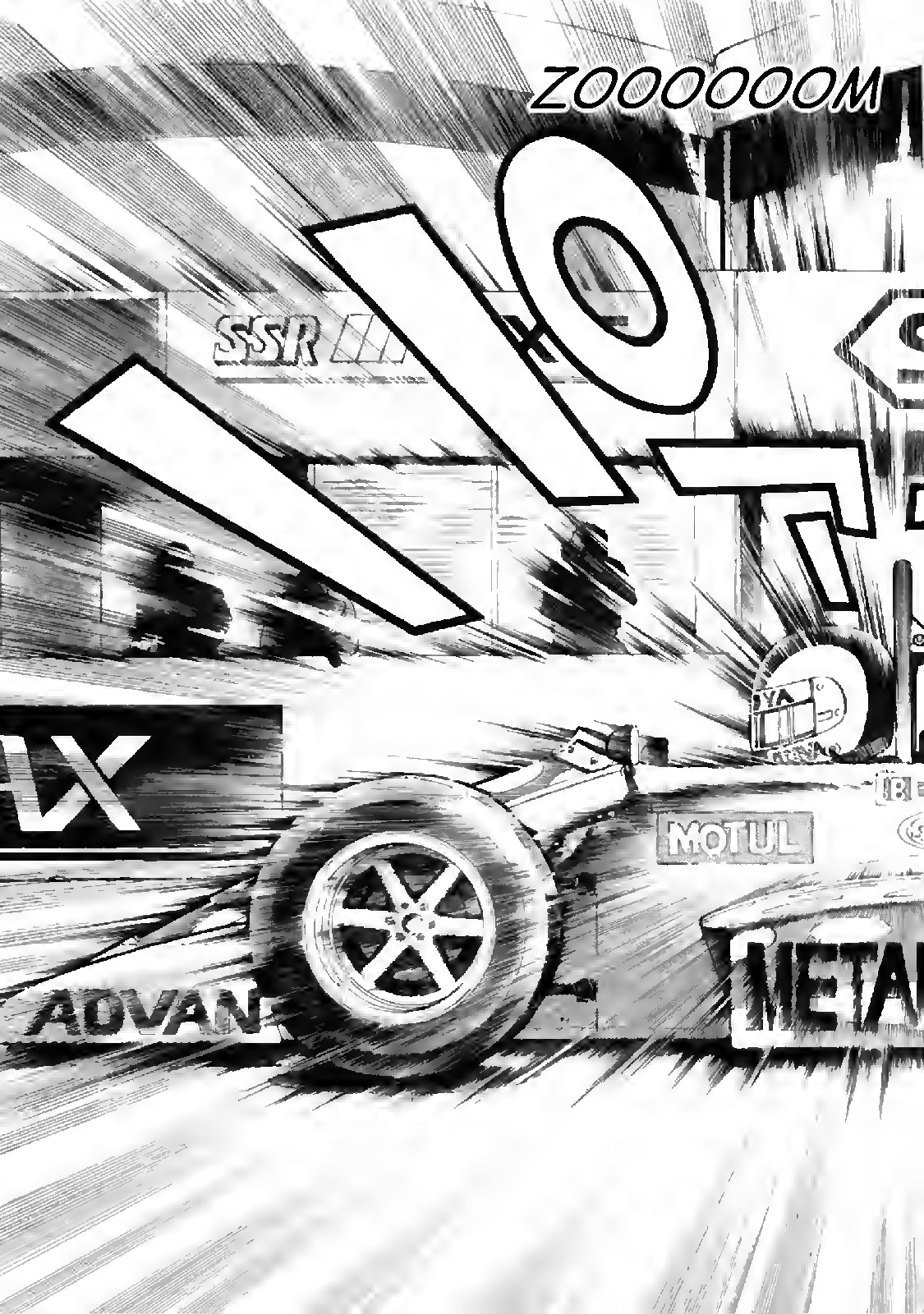
And life continues on...
Dreams give birth to new dreams...
TING

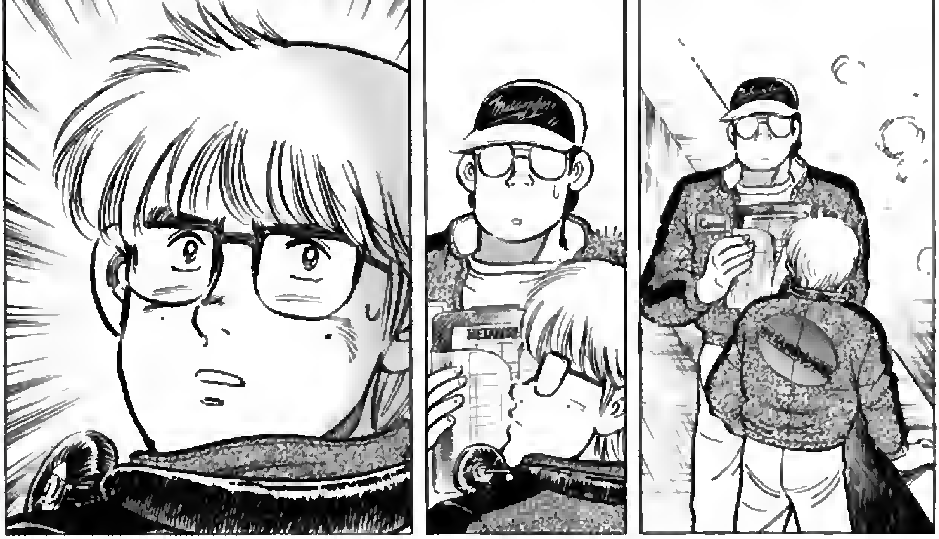
BZZ
BZZ
But it ain't the end.

BZZ
BZZ BZZ
No ends, no limits...


ZOOOOOOM
SSR
SHOEI
THE MAX
GEAR
MOTUL
ADVAN
METAMORPHOSE

SHOEI
GEAR
100
MORPHOSE


ZOOOOOOM
SSR
MOTUL
ADVAN



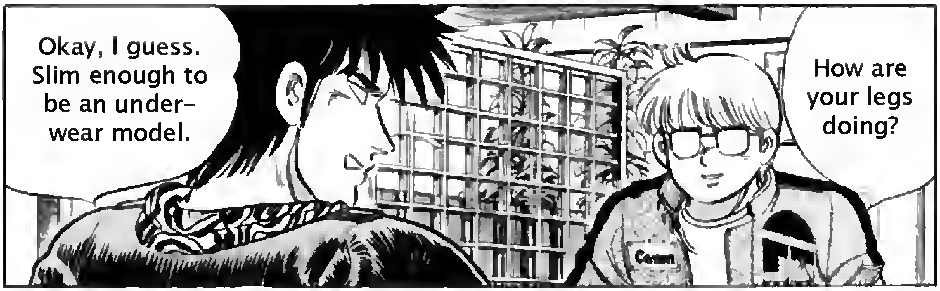
VROOOOOH

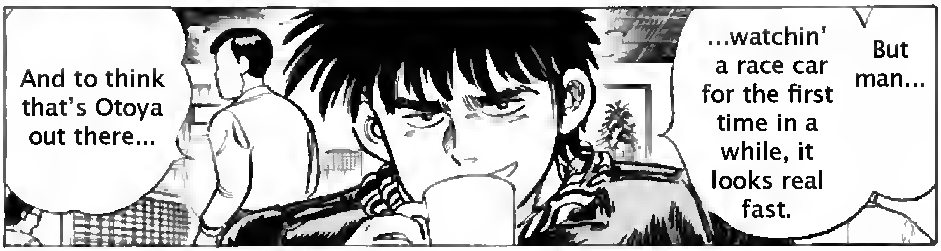
Chapter 4: Impatience

Gunma ...!
Hey Yuma.
METAMORPHOSE
That driver's...
...lookin' pretty good out there.
ZOOOOOM

It's Otoya.
Canon
Did you pick up a foreign driver or somethin'?
!?
VROOOOM
ADVAN
ADVAN
ADVAN
How about we get some lunch?
METAMORPHO
Oh yeah?

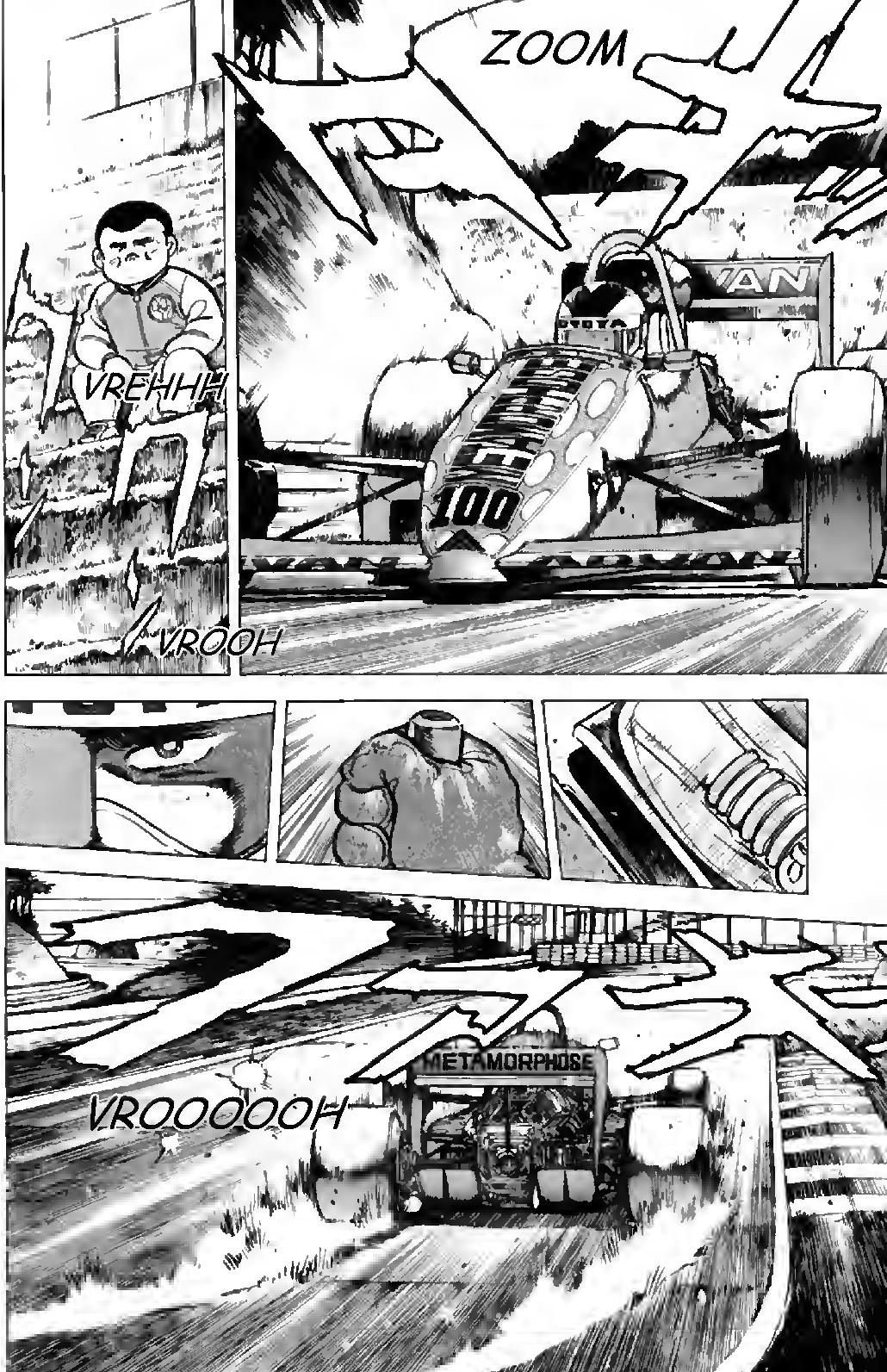
I had to drop by Fukuoka...
...then Suzuka on the way back.
When everyone was expecting you to come back from England, but you didn't show up in Narita...
...reporters were running around like headless chickens.


Okay, I guess. Slim enough to be an under-wear model.
How are your legs doing?

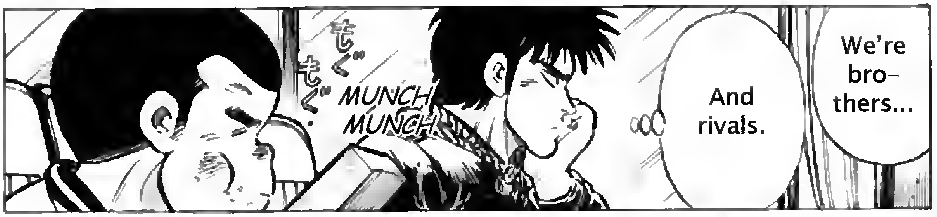

And to think that's Otoya out there...
...watchin' a race car for the first time in a while, it looks real fast.
But man...

...
Kazuyoshi Hoshino said that you don't really feel it when you're driving, but when you watch others drive, you can really feel the speed, and it's a fearful thing to think you're going that fast.
That's how it is.

To the house, of course.
Back where?
By the way, will you be coming back for New Years?
...our company's been going through some hard times.
This might not concern you, but...
Hard times?
Maybe you're right.
What are you talkin' about? I ain't a part of that family.
Besides, I can't show my face there with Shoma and that stupid old bastard...
Dad's gone out of control.
Uh-huh.
!?

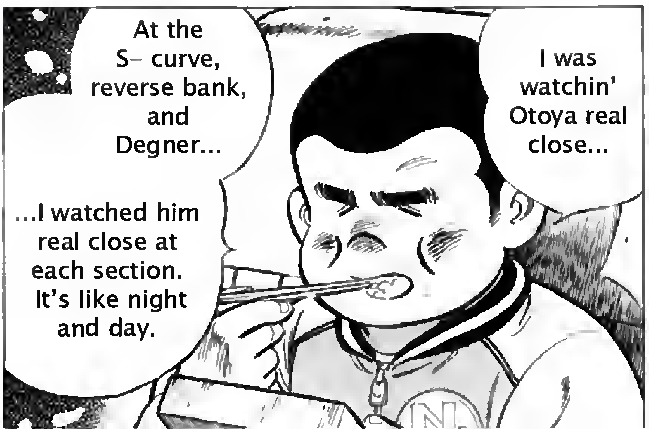

ZOOM
VREHHH
VROOH
100
METAMORPHOSE
VROOOOOH

I always thought of you as part of the family, Gunma.
Anyway, don't be a stranger if you change your mind.


We're bro- thers...
And rivals.
もぐもぐ
MUNCH MUNCH

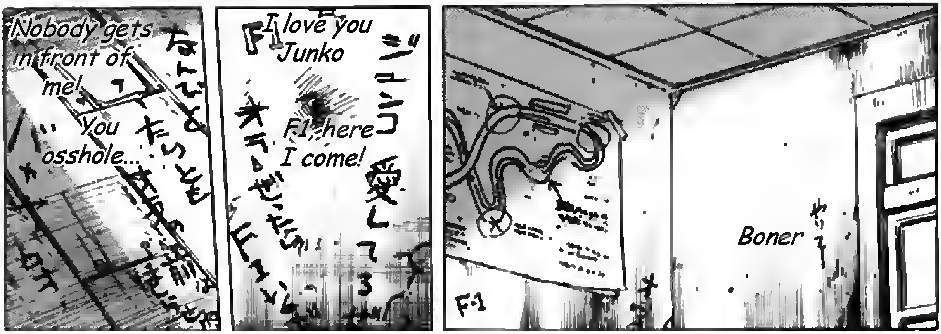
He got faster, Gunma.

But... I wonder what that geezer's got up his sleeve?

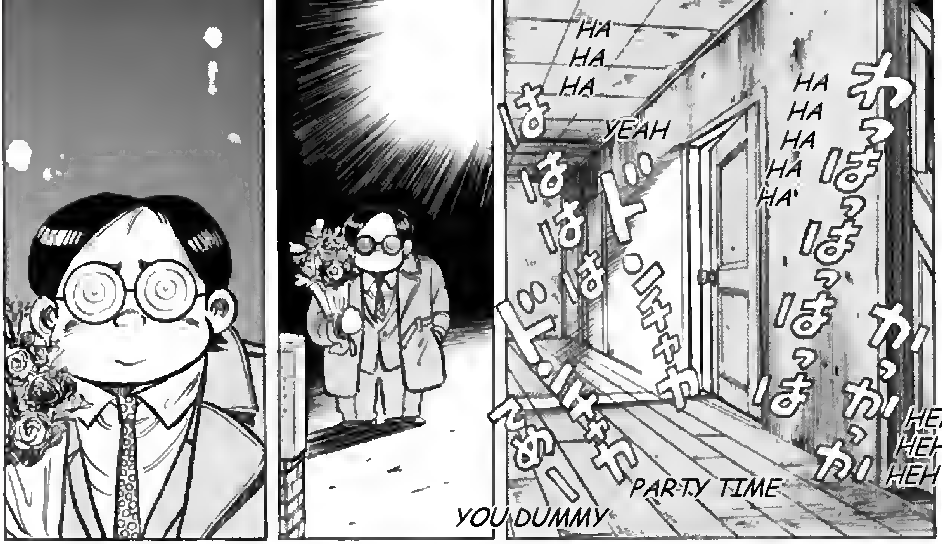

At the S- curve, reverse bank, and Degner...
...I watched him real close at each section. It's like night and day.
I was watchin' Otoya real close...

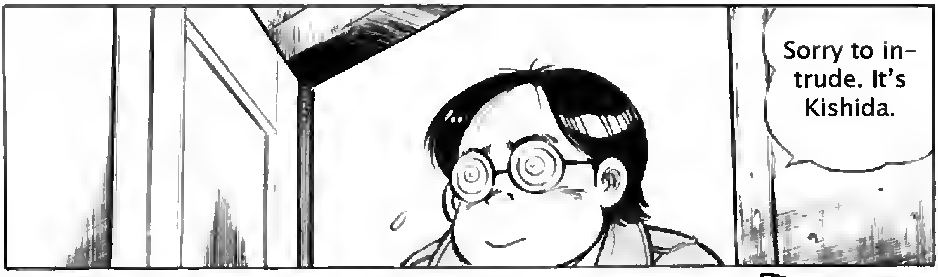
Tsh...
小森荘
Gunmaaaa!

You're finally home.
You're finally home.
You've put me through so much suffering.


Nobody gets in front of me!
You asshole...
I love you Junko
F-1, here I come!
Boner
F-1

Hey there!
KREE
...


HA HA HA
YEAH
HA HA HA HA HA
HEH HEH HEH
PARTY TIME
YOU DUMMY


Sorry to intrude. It's Kishida.

PARTY TIME
うんちきさわぎっ
Whoa...
GET DOWN
GET DOWN
GET DOWN

What?
Honey, Shoma's here.

I thought it would be nice to have a drink with you every now and then, Dad.

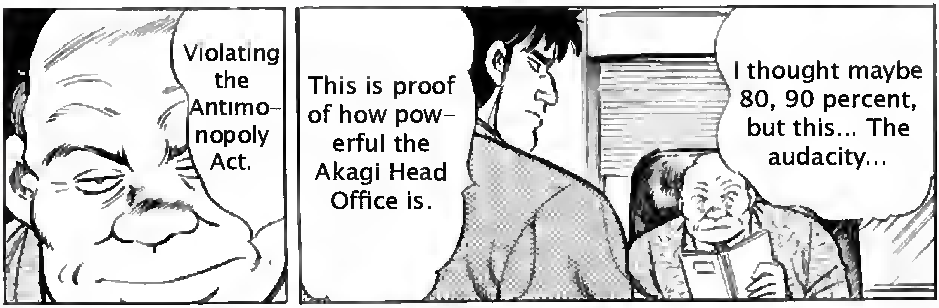
Then why won't he show himself?
He's still alive somewhere.
No.
So... Did they ever find Mr. Kasai's body?

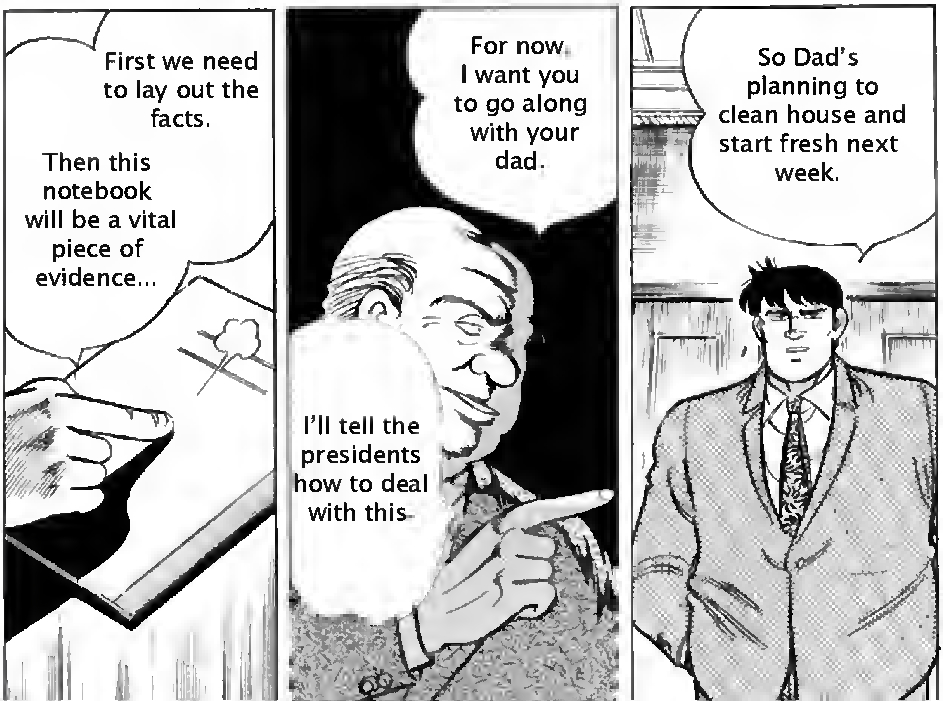
...
Well, he's not part of the family, after all.
I don't know.
!?
Dad.
I'm your son, and the Akagi Family's eldest. I want to help you achieve your vision!
I'm willing to go along with your plan. Please let me be a part of it!

That's why I needed Kasai.
But you're still so young.
Without much experience.
That was my intention from the beginning, of course.
...I want to help you, Dad! And I'm asking for your acceptance!
But now that no one knows where he is...
Dad!
Please!
He's so eager to help.
Show your son a little more trust, honey.
...

Shoma doesn't understand my vision.
I can only share my dream...
Where are you, Kasai?
Why won't you come back?
...with those who crawled through...
...the post-war ruins with me!
And I do love him.
But Shoma is my son.
I need you to come back!
Kasai...

This is a shock, he's planning to fire every one of the presidents.
Mr. Tagawa, I got a hold of the list.
Well done, Shoma.
Tagawa Food Co., Ltd.

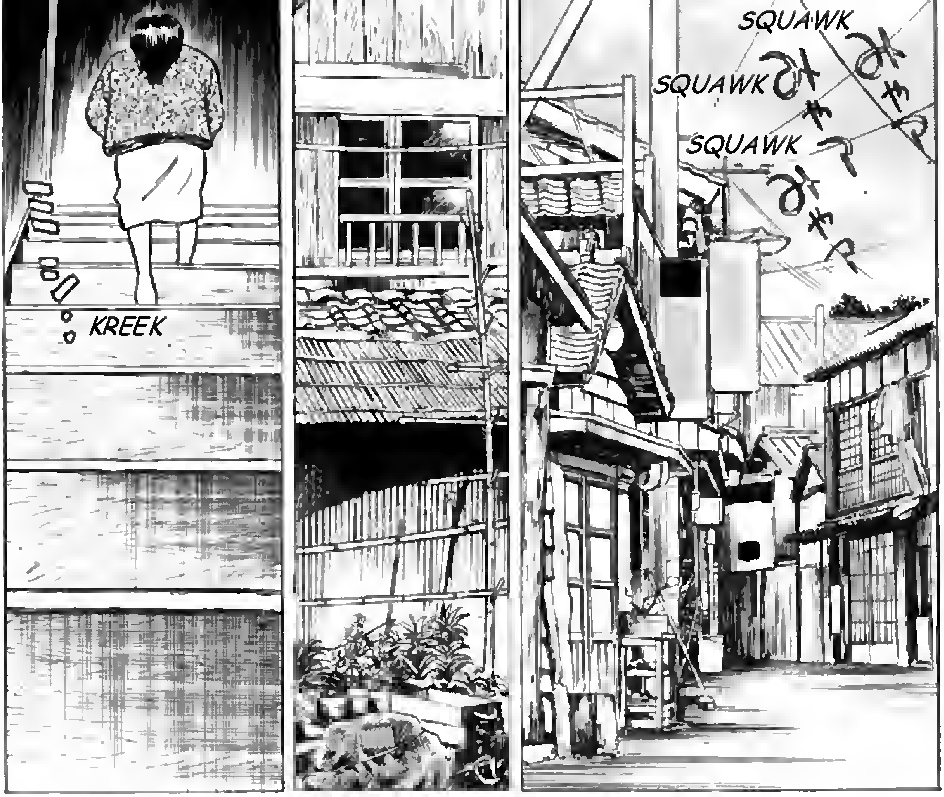

Violating the Antimonopoly Act.
This is proof of how powerful the Akagi Head Office is.
I thought maybe 80, 90 percent, but this... The audacity...

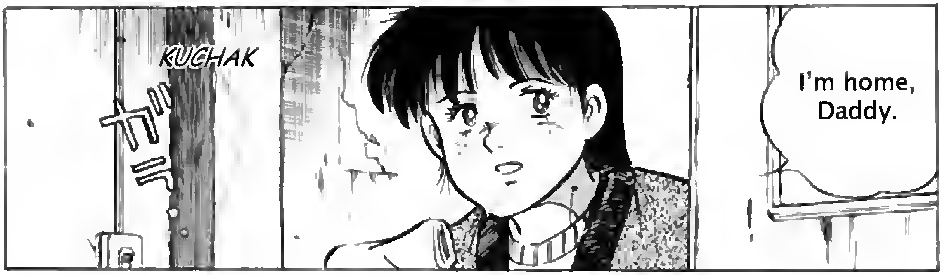

First we need to lay out the facts.
Then this notebook will be a vital piece of evidence...
For now, I want you to go along with your dad.
I'll tell the presidents how to deal with this.
So Dad's planning to clean house and start fresh next week.

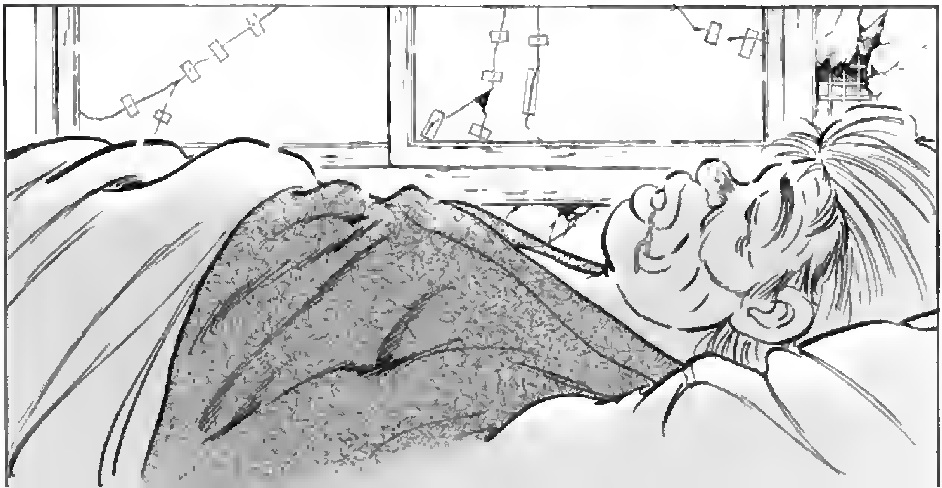
PAT
!
...for driving Soichiro out of the Akagi Head Office!
Don't worry.
But what about the Head Office board meeting?
!
If we carefully utilize the shares in you and your mother's names, the rest is easy!
Got it.
...
Then you become the next Head Office president, and save Akagi Group from Soichiro's useless gamble! Got it, Shoma?

赤木グループ改造人事!!

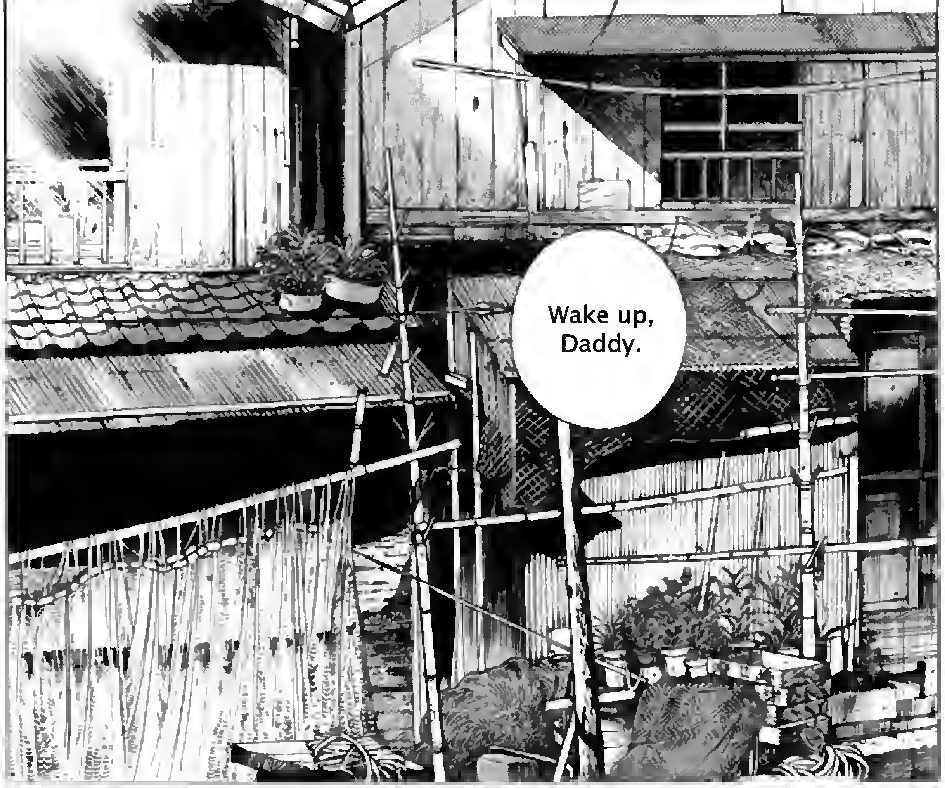
Akagi Group to clean house!


KREEK
SQUAWK
SQUAWK
SQUAWK

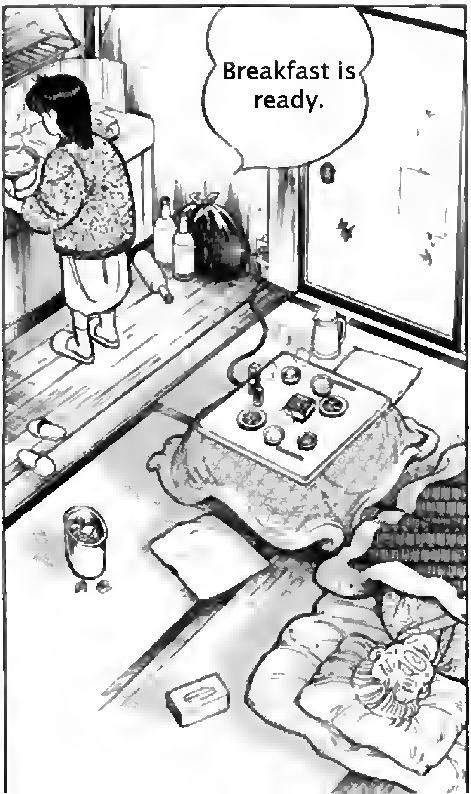

KUCHAK
I'm home, Daddy.

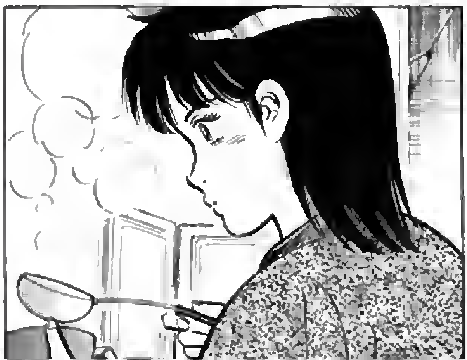


Chapter 5: Waves

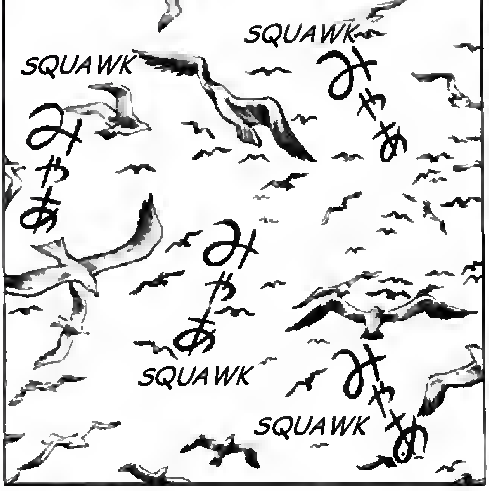

Wake up, Daddy.

...

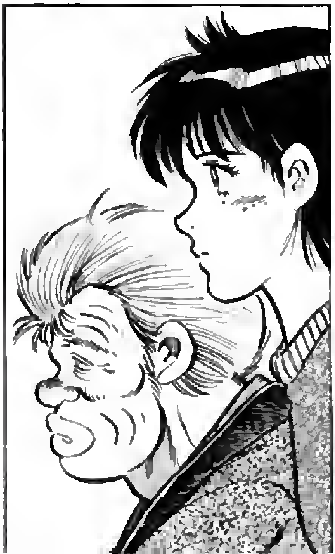

Breakfast is ready.

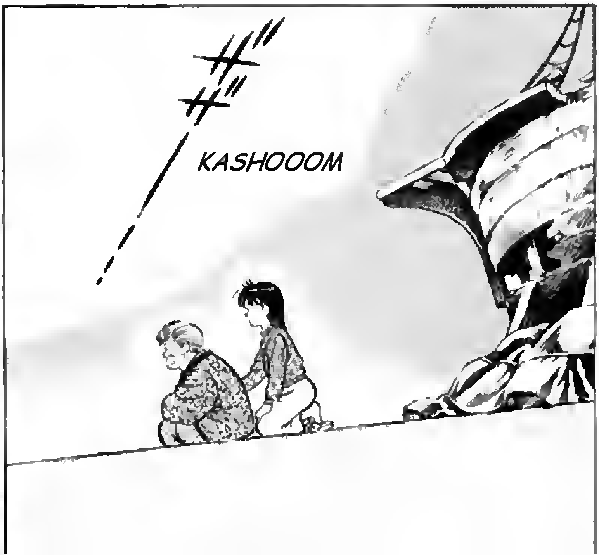


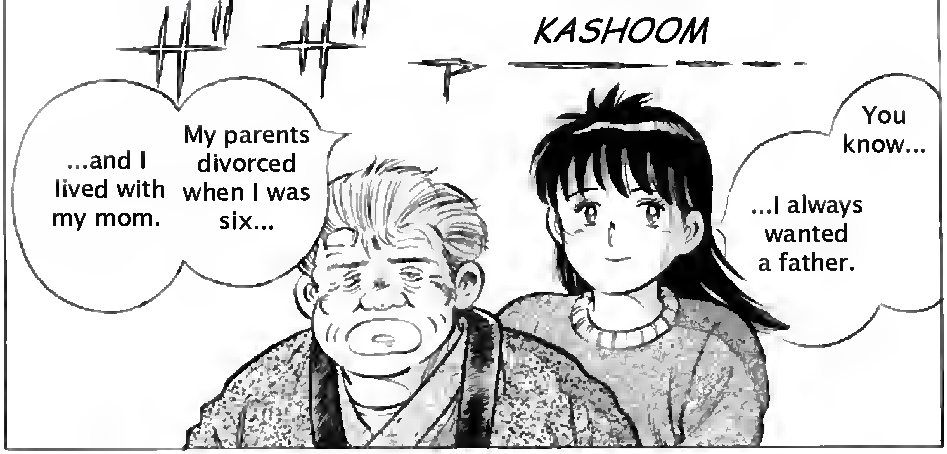
TWITCH
Gwa-hhh...
It's break-fast time.
Uhng ...
Let's wipe those tears and mouth.
Gwuh ...
Don't be afraid.
It's just me.
...
The seagulls are really squawking out there!
Let's go to the beach today, Daddy.
ズルズル・・・
SLURP
Open wide.

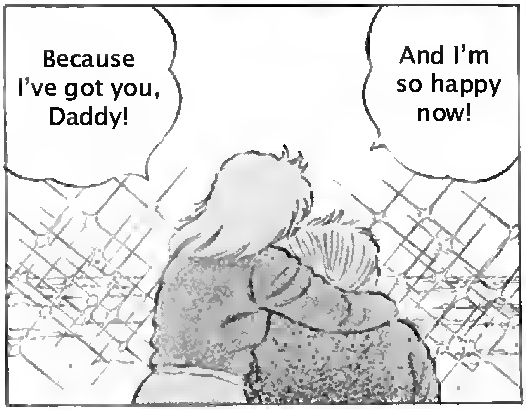

SQUAWK
みゃあ
SQUAWK
みゃあ
みゃあ
SQUAWK
みゃあ
SQUAWK

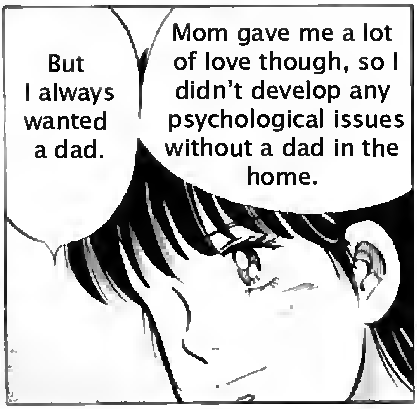
月桂冠
いこい食堂

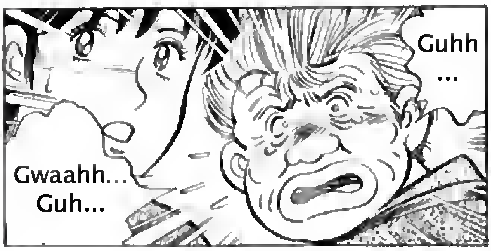


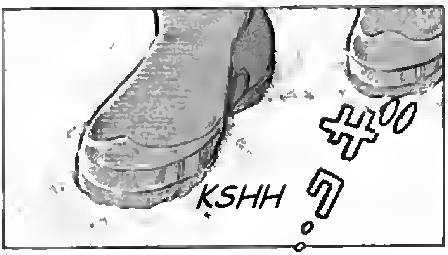

KASHOOOM

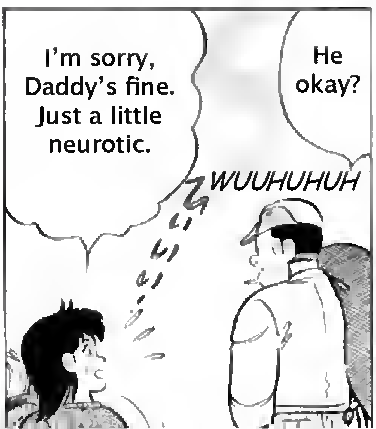

KASHOOM
...and I lived with my mom.
My parents divorced when I was six...
You know...
...I always wanted a father.


Because I've got you, Daddy!
And I'm so happy now!

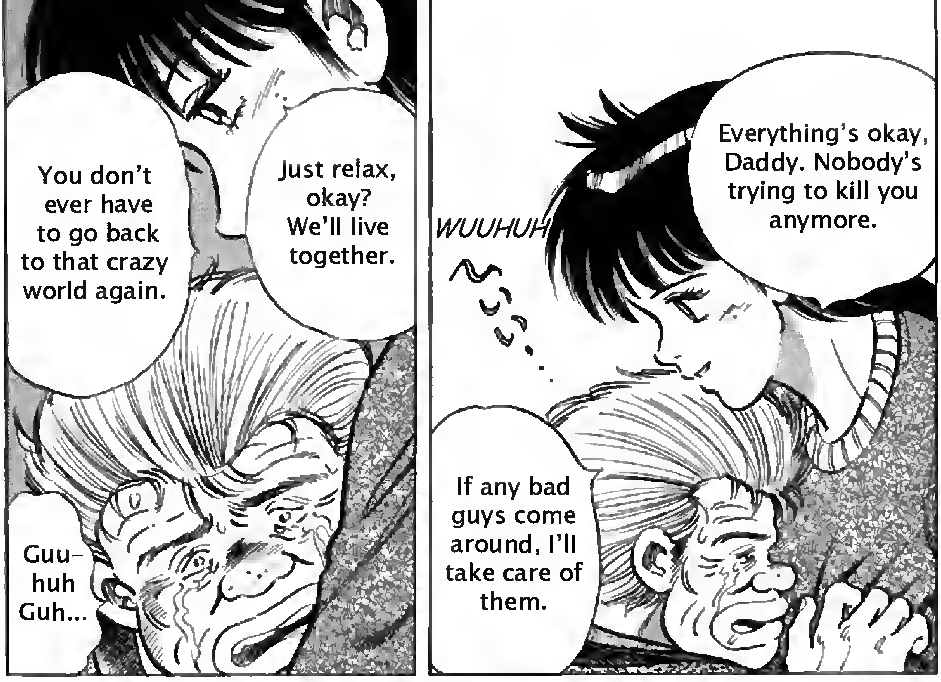

But I always wanted a dad.
Mom gave me a lot of love though, so I didn't develop any psychological issues without a dad in the home.


Guhh...
Gwaahh... Guh...


KSHH

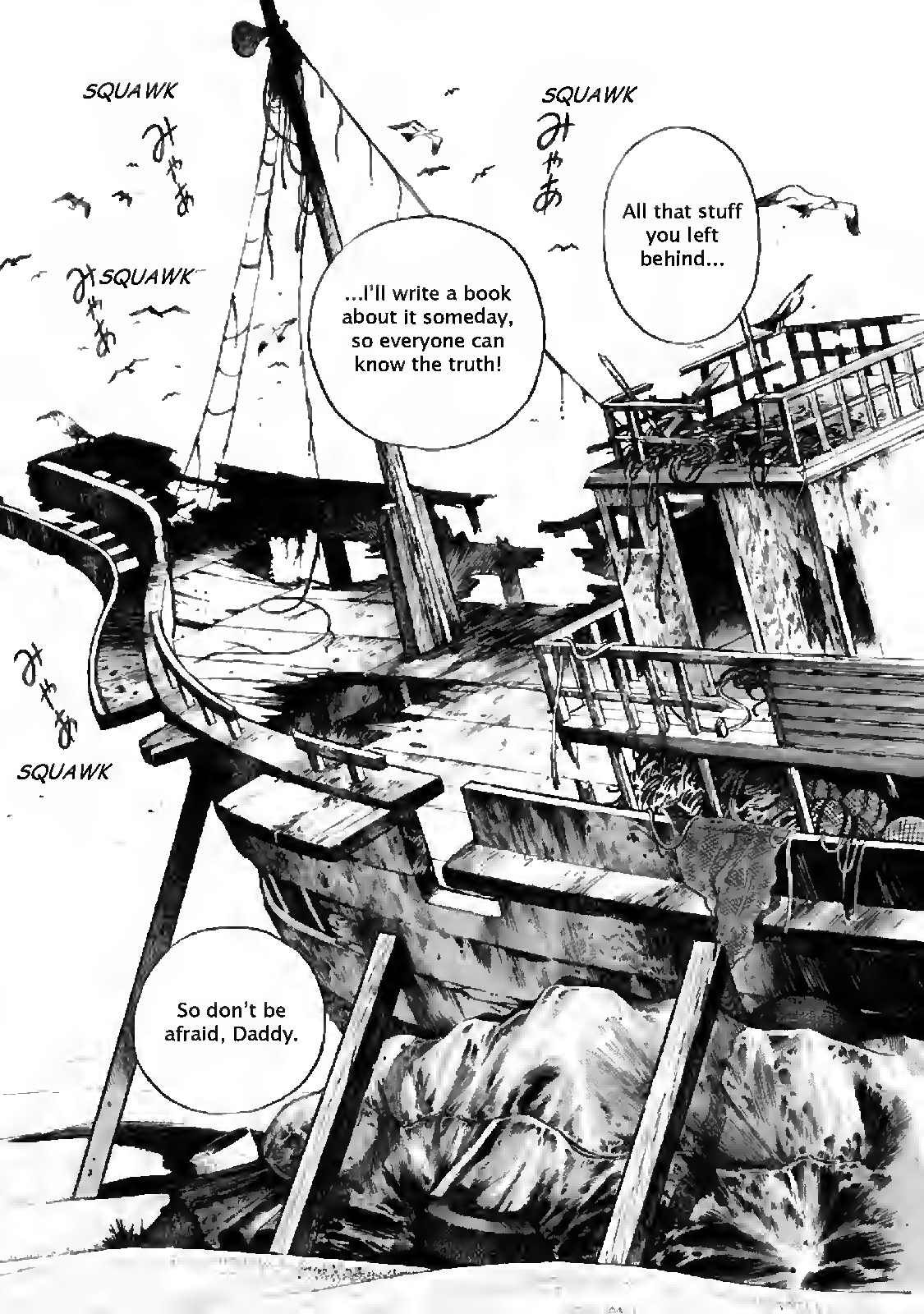

I'm sorry, Daddy's fine. Just a little neurotic.
He okay?
WUUHUHUH

Gwahhhh Wuhuh...
...?

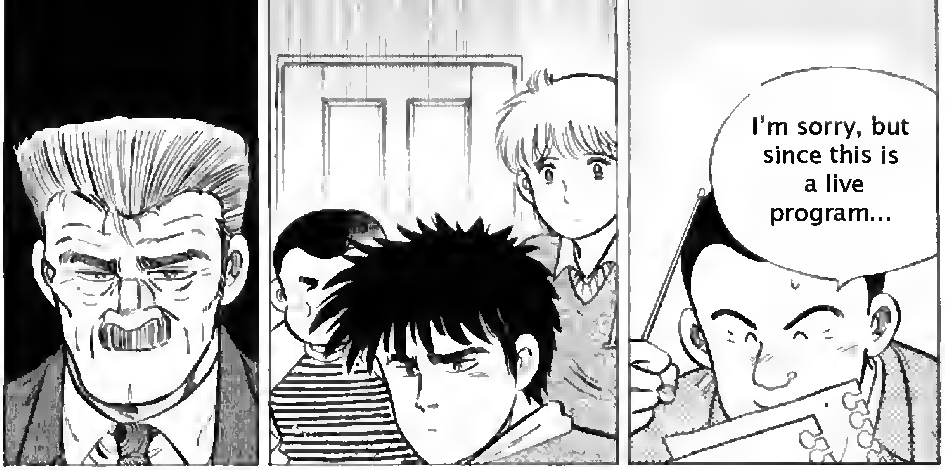

You don't ever have to go back to that crazy world again.
Just relax, okay? We'll live together.
Guu- huh Guh...
WUUHUH
Everything's okay, Daddy. Nobody's trying to kill you anymore.
If any bad guys come around, I'll take care of them.

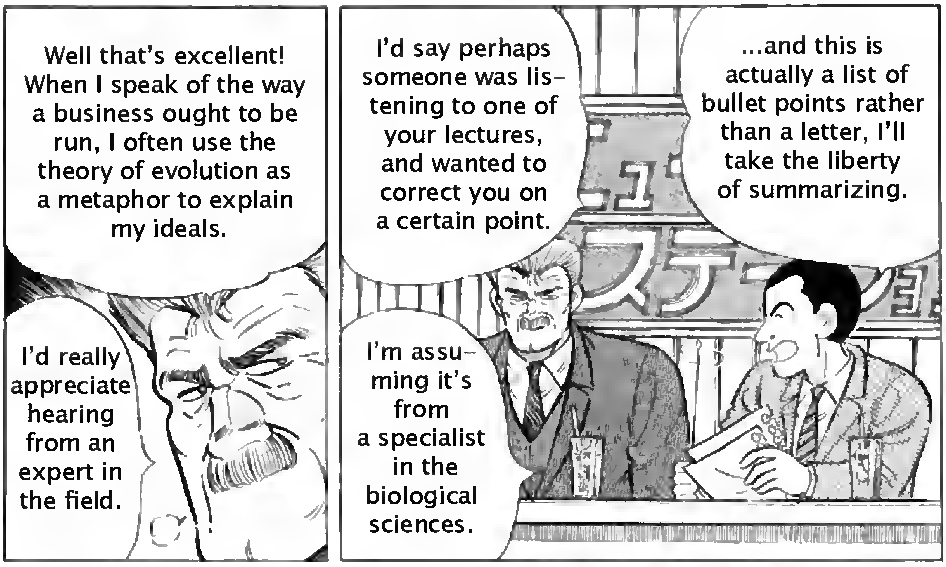
You worked so hard all these years, I know it was rough. But you can put all that behind you now.
That really bothered you, didn't it... You're such a timid person at heart.

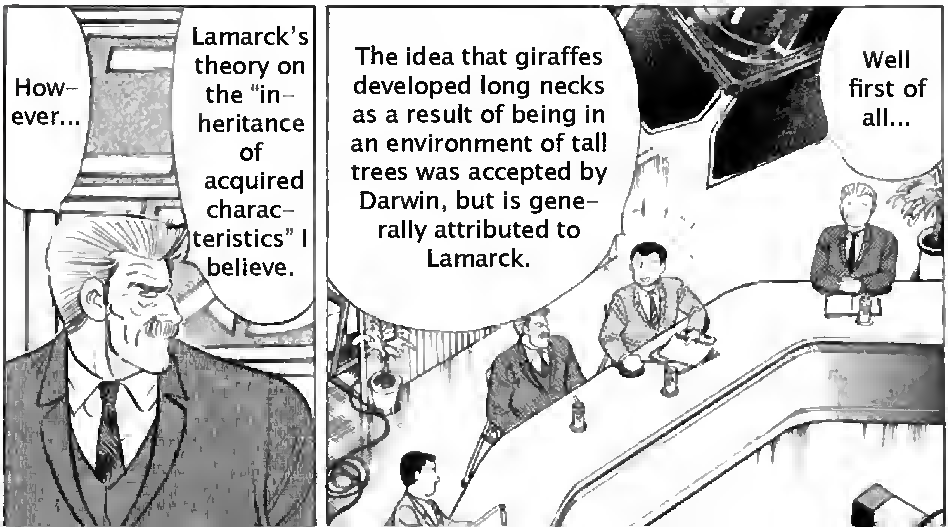
SQUAWK
SQUAWK
SQUAWK
SQUAWK
Just the two of us...
...we'll live together, and I'll take care of you.
You don't ever have to go back...
...to that world, where people kill each other like it's nothing.


SQUAWK
SQUAWK
SQUAWK
SQUAWK
All that stuff you left behind...
...I'll write a book about it someday, so everyone can know the truth!
So don't be afraid, Daddy.

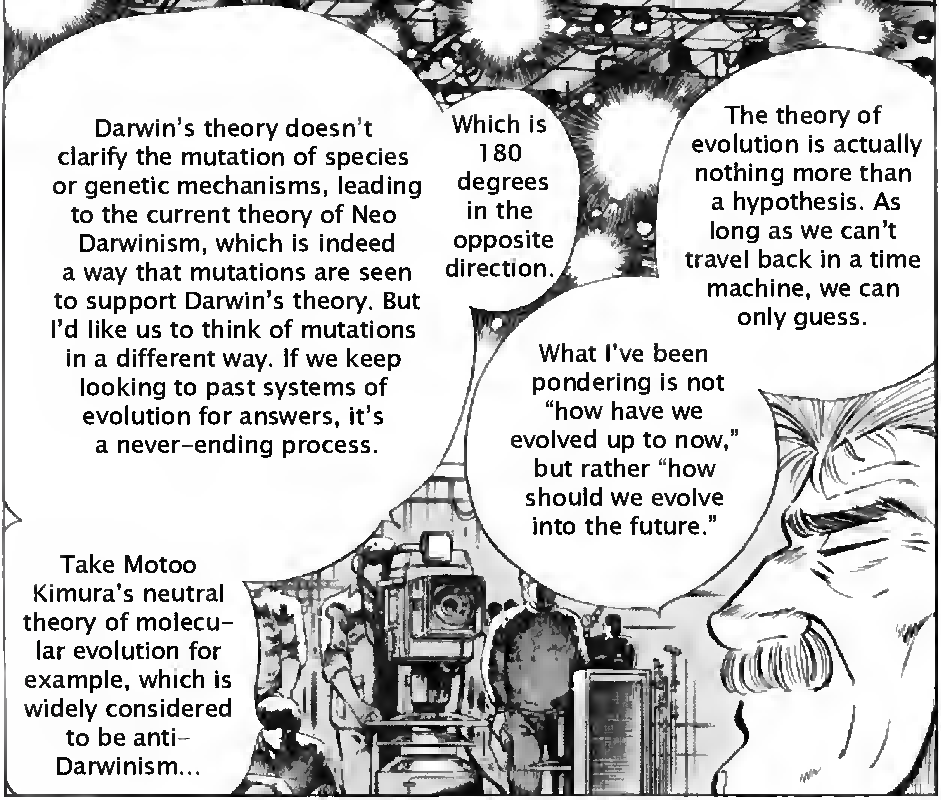
Introducing Mr. Soichiro Akagi, president and CEO of Akagi Group's Head Office.
Good evening, I'm Hiro Kome.
Our guest tonight on News Station is a man who everybody's been talking about.
ステーション
Hmm, there's no introduction here, it just starts off saying you're either an illogical loon...
...or someone who's been misinformed, and needs correction.
Oh boy...
Sorry to jump right into this, but we have a message from one of our viewers for Mr. Akagi.
It says here that uh...
CRUNCH

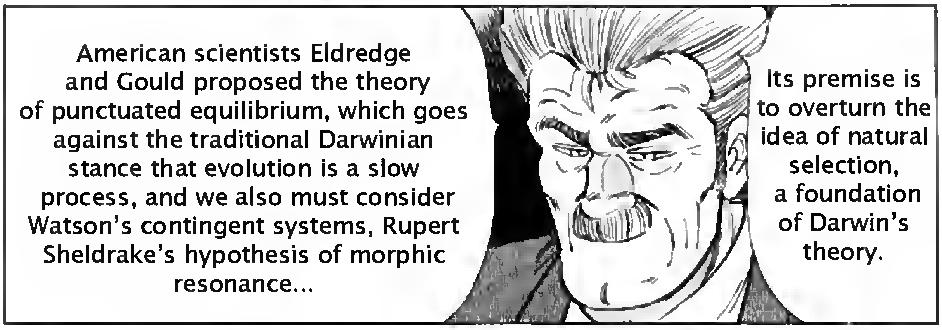

I'm sorry, but since this is a live program...

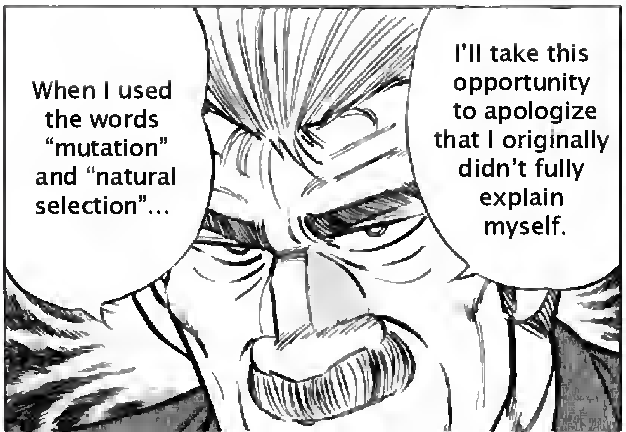

Well that's excellent! When I speak of the way a business ought to be run, I often use the theory of evolution as a metaphor to explain my ideals.
I'd really appreciate hearing from an expert in the field.
I'd say perhaps someone was listening to one of your lectures, and wanted to correct you on a certain point.
I'm assuming it's from a specialist in the biological sciences.
...and this is actually a list of bullet points rather than a letter, I'll take the liberty of summarizing.

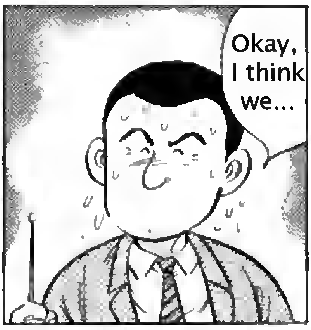

However...
Lamarck's theory on the "inheritance of acquired characteristics" I believe.
The idea that giraffes developed long necks as a result of being in an environment of tall trees was accepted by Darwin, but is generally attributed to Lamarck.
Well first of all...

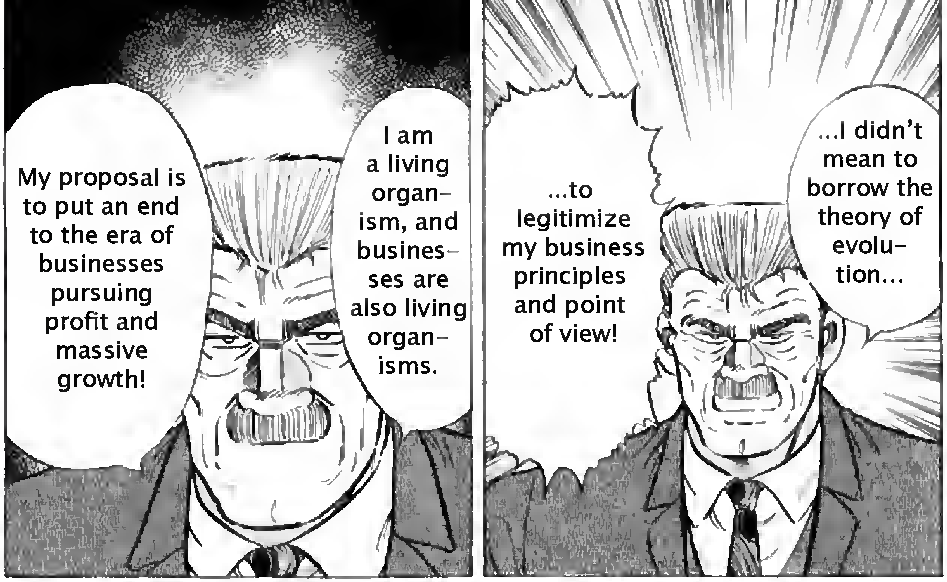
I suppose I could use this opportunity to make a correction.
During my lecture, I was only explaining my business principles. It wasn't a talk on the theory of evolution.
I used Darwin's name in particular because of the impact it has on the audience.
Moving on...
And regarding your statement that evolution is not a result of adapting to the environment, it's just a matter of living things doing what they want to do...
...but the theory of mutation doesn't contradict Darwin's theory, it actually supports it.
...it says you brought up the mutation theory when discussing Darwin's, or rather, Lamarck's theory...
Of course it isn't!
...that sort of thinking is not in line with Darwinian evolution.
It's seems your viewer is misunderstanding the situation, as if I'm modeling my life after some sort of evolutionary theory.
...?
I made that one up myself.

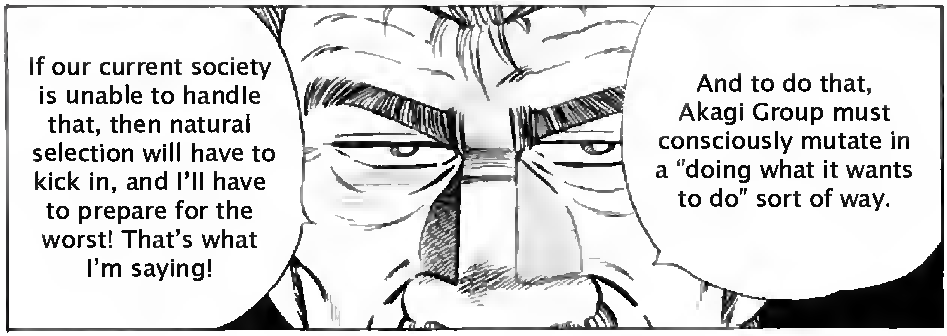

Darwin's theory doesn't clarify the mutation of species or genetic mechanisms, leading to the current theory of Neo Darwinism, which is indeed a way that mutations are seen to support Darwin's theory. But I'd like us to think of mutations in a different way. If we keep looking to past systems of evolution for answers, it's a never-ending process.
Which is 180 degrees in the opposite direction.
The theory of evolution is actually nothing more than a hypothesis. As long as we can't travel back in a time machine, we can only guess.
What I've been pondering is not "how have we evolved up to now," but rather "how should we evolve into the future."
Take Motoo Kimura's neutral theory of molecular evolution for example, which is widely considered to be anti-Darwinism...

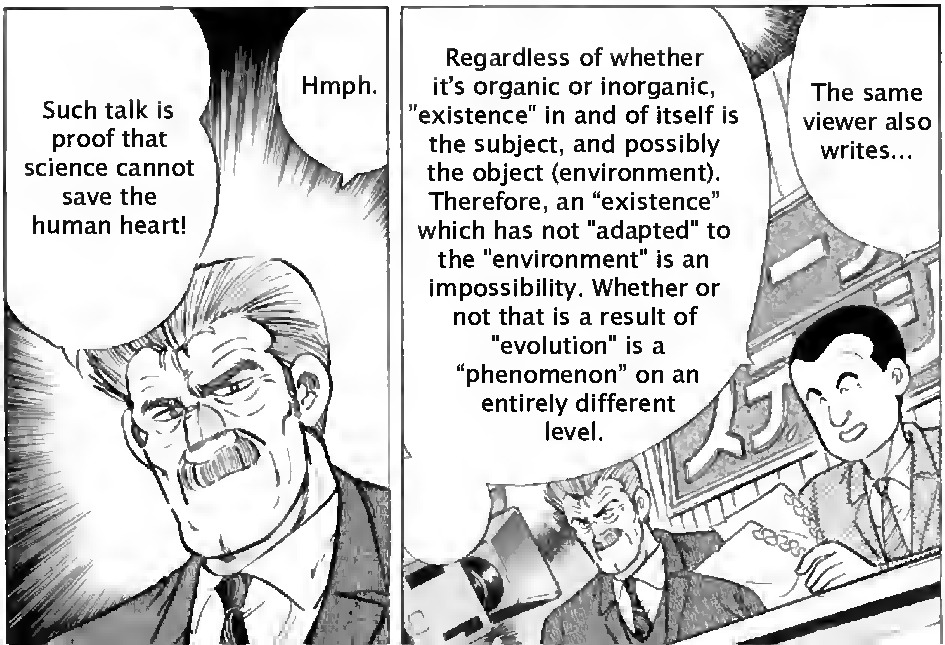

American scientists Eldredge and Gould proposed the theory of punctuated equilibrium, which goes against the traditional Darwinian stance that evolution is a slow process, and we also must consider Watson's contingent systems, Rupert Sheldrake's hypothesis of morphic resonance...
Its premise is to overturn the idea of natural selection, a foundation of Darwin's theory.

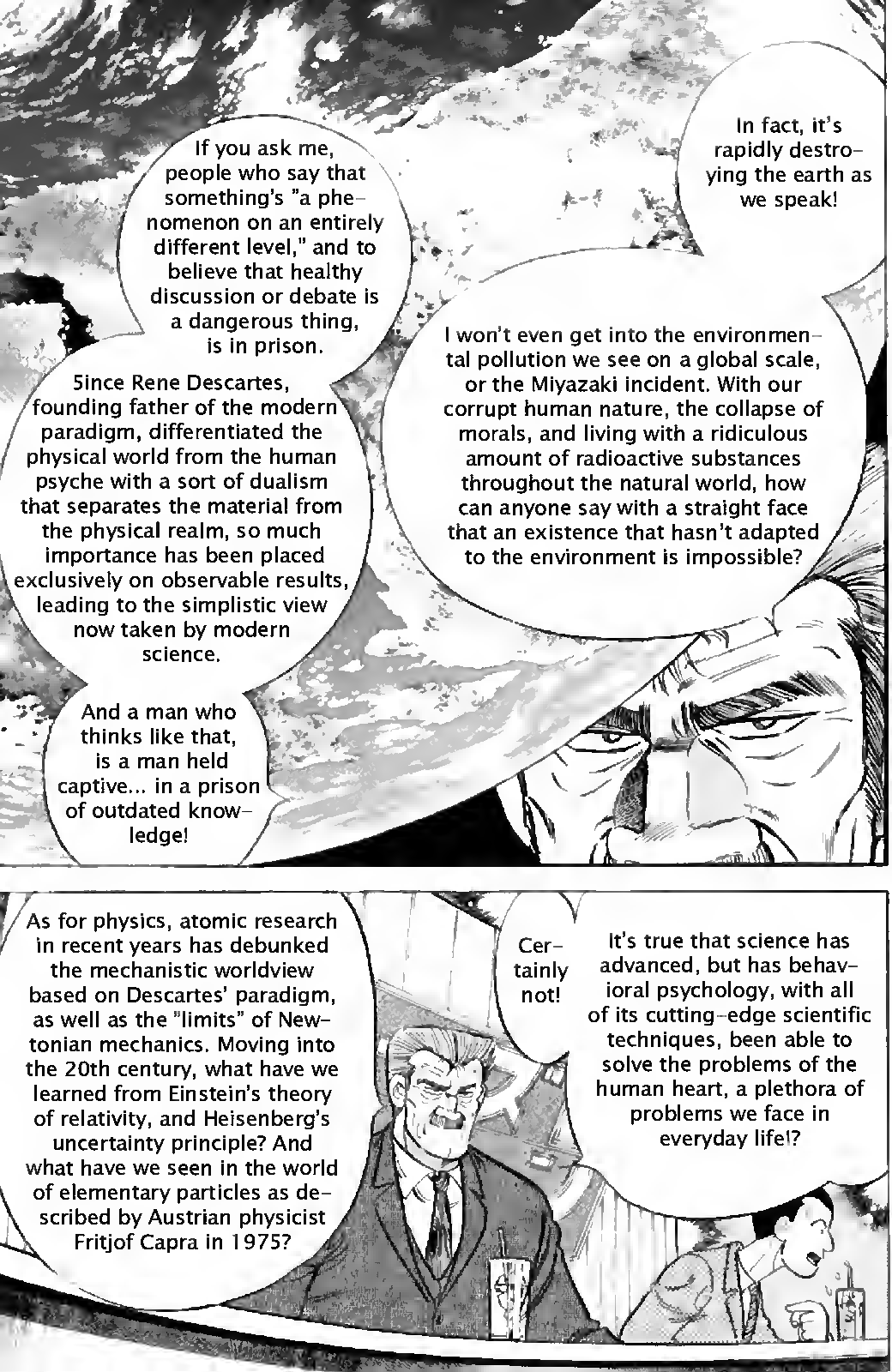

When I used the words "mutation" and "natural selection"...
I'll take this opportunity to apologize that I originally didn't fully explain myself.


Okay, I think we...

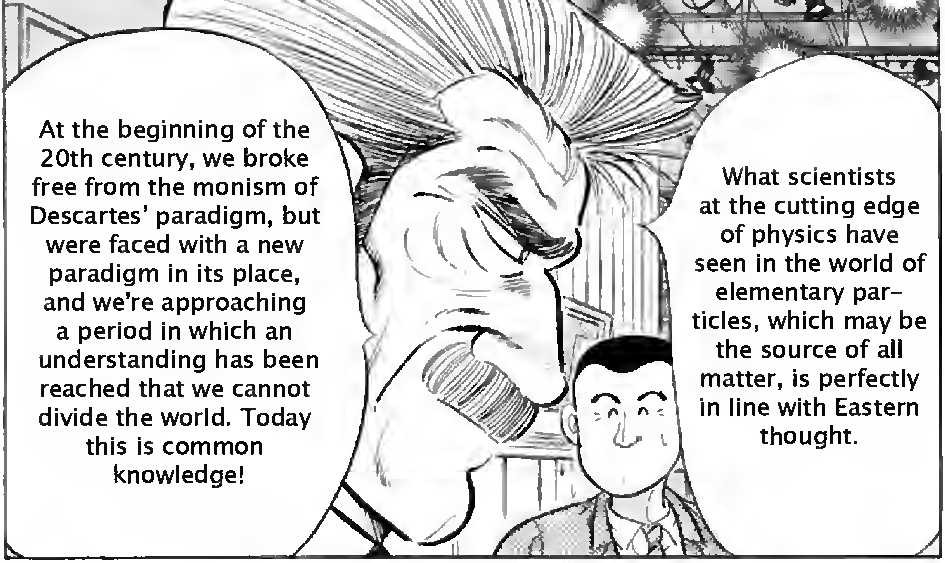

My proposal is to put an end to the era of businesses pursuing profit and massive growth!
I am a living organ-ism, and busines-ses are also living organ-isms.
...to legitimize my business principles and point of view!
...I didn't mean to borrow the theory of evolu-tion...

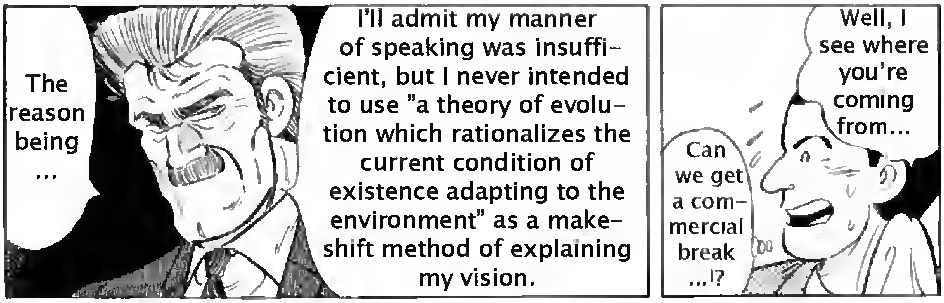

If our current society is unable to handle that, then natural selection will have to kick in, and I'll have to prepare for the worst! That's what I'm saying!
And to do that, Akagi Group must consciously mutate in a "doing what it wants to do" sort of way.


Such talk is proof that science cannot save the human heart!
Hmph.
Regardless of whether it's organic or inorganic, "existence" in and of itself is the subject, and possibly the object (environment). Therefore, an "existence" which has not "adapted" to the "environment" is an impossibility. Whether or not that is a result of "evolution" is a "phenomenon" on an entirely different level.
The same viewer also writes...


If you ask me, people who say that something's "a phenomenon on an entirely different level," and to believe that healthy discussion or debate is a dangerous thing, is in prison.
In fact, it's rapidly destroying the earth as we speak!
I won't even get into the environmental pollution we see on a global scale, or the Miyazaki incident. With our corrupt human nature, the collapse of morals, and living with a ridiculous amount of radioactive substances throughout the natural world, how can anyone say with a straight face that an existence that hasn't adapted to the environment is impossible?
Since Rene Descartes, founding father of the modern paradigm, differentiated the physical world from the human psyche with a sort of dualism that separates the material from the physical realm, so much importance has been placed exclusively on observable results, leading to the simplistic view now taken by modern science.
And a man who thinks like that, is a man held captive... in a prison of outdated knowledge!
As for physics, atomic research in recent years has debunked the mechanistic worldview based on Descartes' paradigm, as well as the "limits" of Newtonian mechanics. Moving into the 20th century, what have we learned from Einstein's theory of relativity, and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle? And what have we seen in the world of elementary particles as described by Austrian physicist Fritjof Capra in 1975?
Certainly not!
It's true that science has advanced, but has behavioral psychology, with all of its cutting-edge scientific techniques, been able to solve the problems of the human heart, a plethora of problems we face in everyday life!?

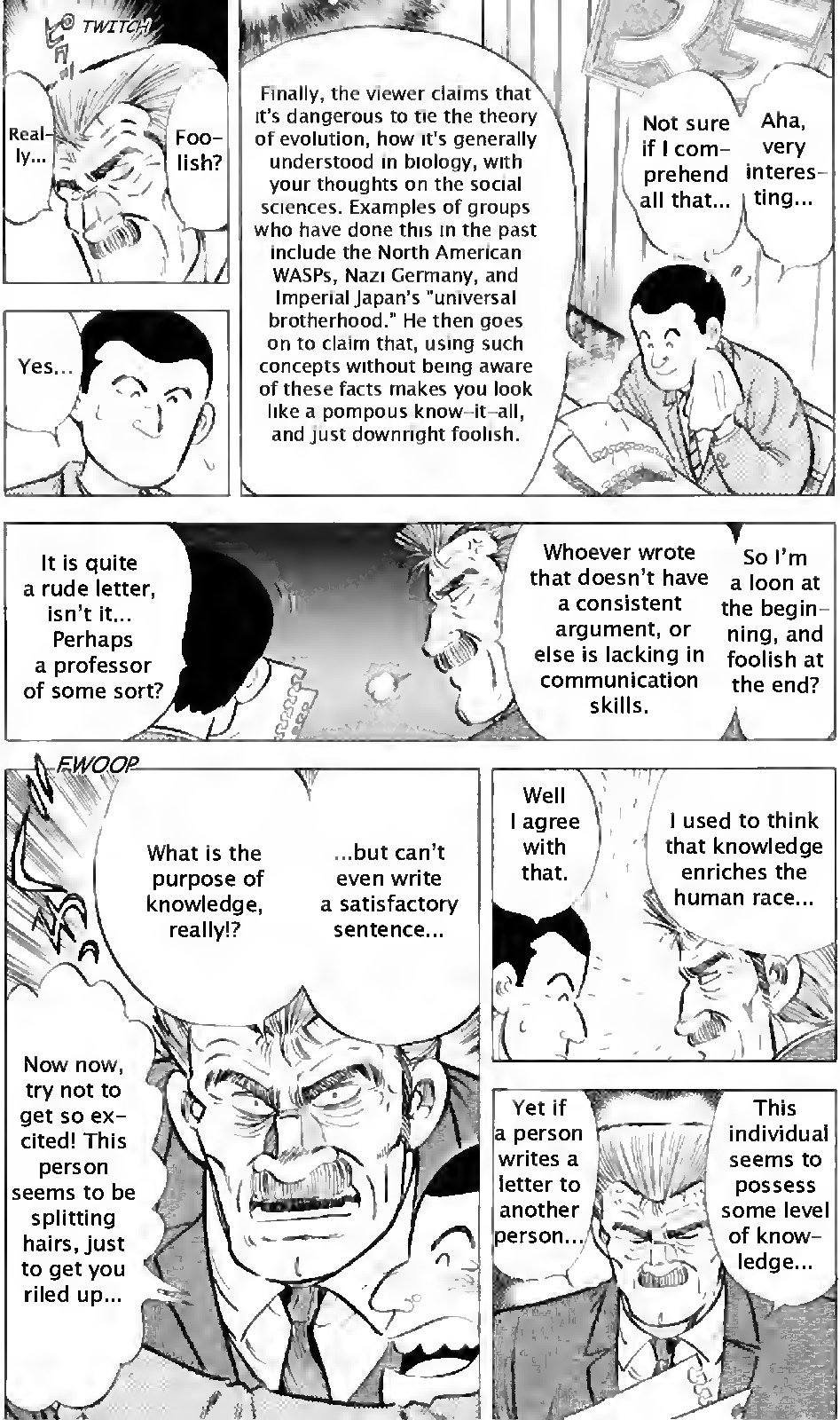
* The Tao of Physics by Fritjof CapraKousakusha


At the beginning of the 20th century, we broke free from the monism of Descartes' paradigm, but were faced with a new paradigm in its place, and we're approaching a period in which an understanding has been reached that we cannot divide the world. Today this is common knowledge!
What scientists at the cutting edge of physics have seen in the world of elementary particles, which may be the source of all matter, is perfectly in line with Eastern thought.


The reason being ...
I'll admit my manner of speaking was insufficient, but I never intended to use "a theory of evolution which rationalizes the current condition of existence adapting to the environment" as a makeshift method of explaining my vision.
Well, I see where you're coming from...
Can we get a commercial break ...!?

According to Taoism, "the world is a large, interrelated process." And I venture to say that my conglomerate, the Akagi Group, uses a single conscious mutation to survive in that process!
...I don't need to depend on fossils. I am a living human being, and as long as I continue to evolve, I myself am the answer to evolution!
THUD

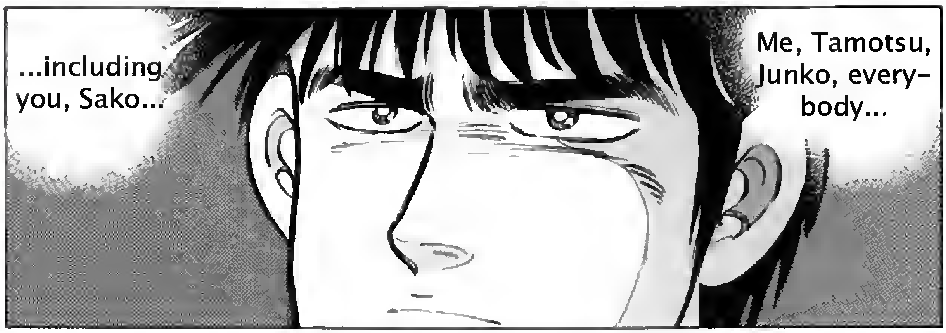
...process...
A large...


TWITCH
Really...
Foolish?
Yes...
Finally, the viewer claims that it's dangerous to tie the theory of evolution, how it's generally understood in biology, with your thoughts on the social sciences. Examples of groups who have done this in the past include the North American WASPs, Nazi Germany, and Imperial Japan's "universal brotherhood." He then goes on to claim that, using such concepts without being aware of these facts makes you look like a pompous know-it-all, and just downright foolish.
Not sure if I comprehend all that...
Aha, very interesting...
It is quite a rude letter, isn't it... Perhaps a professor of some sort?
Whoever wrote that doesn't have a consistent argument, or else is lacking in communication skills.
So I'm a loon at the beginning, and foolish at the end?
FWOOP
What is the purpose of knowledge, really!?
...but can't even write a satisfactory sentence...
Now now, try not to get so excited! This person seems to be splitting hairs, just to get you riled up...
Well I agree with that.
I used to think that knowledge enriches the human race...
Yet if a person writes a letter to another person...
This individual seems to possess some level of knowledge...

Mr. Akagi! Please calm down!
...you should have saved your hasty judgments...
go to com-mercial!
FWOOP
Calling me a loon, or foolish, or potentially dangerous...
I'll get as excited as I damn well please! And I won't even comment on his Nazi examples, as I've already sufficiently explained myself!
Where's the damn commercial break!?
...for after my plan has been completed!
I can't handle this anymore... I just can't...
It's a classic case of diarrhea of the mouth, only in written form!
CRASH
CLATTER
...yet not be enlightened by it in the slightest?
How could someone be so knowledgeable...
BOOOOOOOP
We apologize for any inappropriate language or actions you may have witnessed on our program.

はっはっは
HA HA HA
...but that was pretty intense.
What a bunch of gibberish...
WHEW
He looks old.
Not really.
...your pops seems as spry as always, huh?
Anyway Gunma...
...look so old before.
I've never seen him...
But there is one thing I liked about his rant...
SLAM
Gunma ...

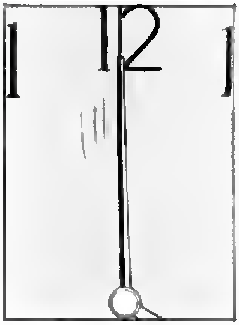
...one big process...
The world is...

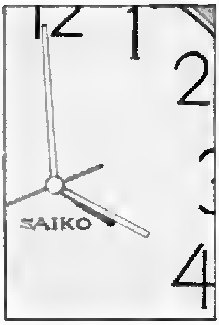

...including you, Sako...
Me, Tamotsu, Junko, everybody...

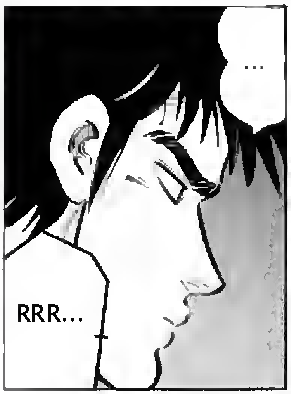
And on and on...

Chapter 6:
Happy New Year

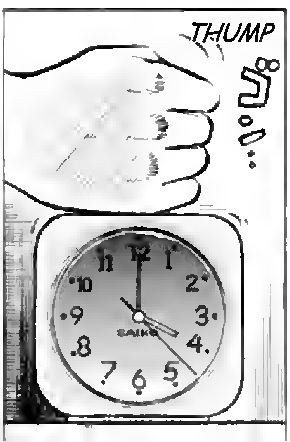
SAIKO




SAIKO


...
RRR...

RRRRR
RRR...

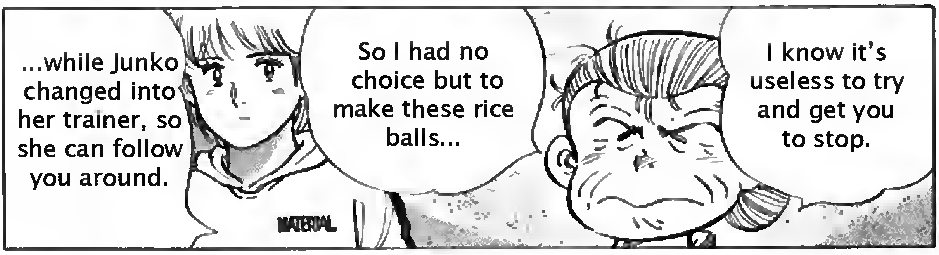

THUMP
ガン!!
SAIKO

KACHIK
KACHIK
Goin' for a piss?
How come yer up so early, dude?
Oh...
Hey.
I was feelin' a little uneasy...
No...
...?
What do you mean?
KREE

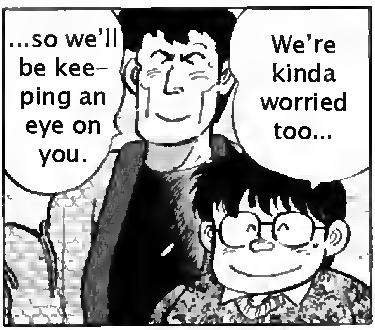
What's everybody doin' up so early?
GLULULUL
トポトポ
トポ…
WRAP にぎ…
WRAP にぎ
WRAP にぎ
Feeling a little uneasy...
We're just um...
Yeah, me too.
Yawn... Man, I'm feelin' a bit uneasy today.
...!?
It's like yer a bunch of sensitive animals before an earthquake!
What the hell is going on here!?

You're going against the doctor's orders, and doing your own reckless rehabilitation...
And then...
Then it's just as we all thought.
Yeah, so what!
Going out for a jog?
小森井

Hey, I'll take that as a compliment. Everybody seems pretty concerned about my health.
...you'll ruin any bit of progress you've made so far.

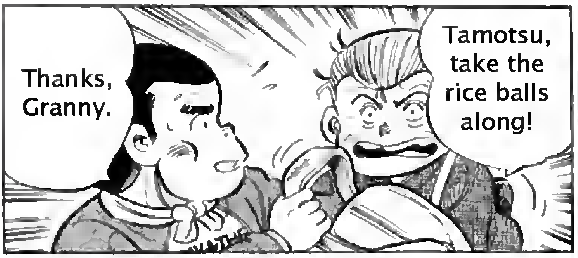

...while Junko changed into her trainer, so she can follow you around.
So I had no choice but to make these rice balls...
I know it's useless to try and get you to stop.

But...
Oh yeah? Hey, I appreci-ate the thought.


...so we'll be kee-ping an eye on you.
We're kinda worried too...

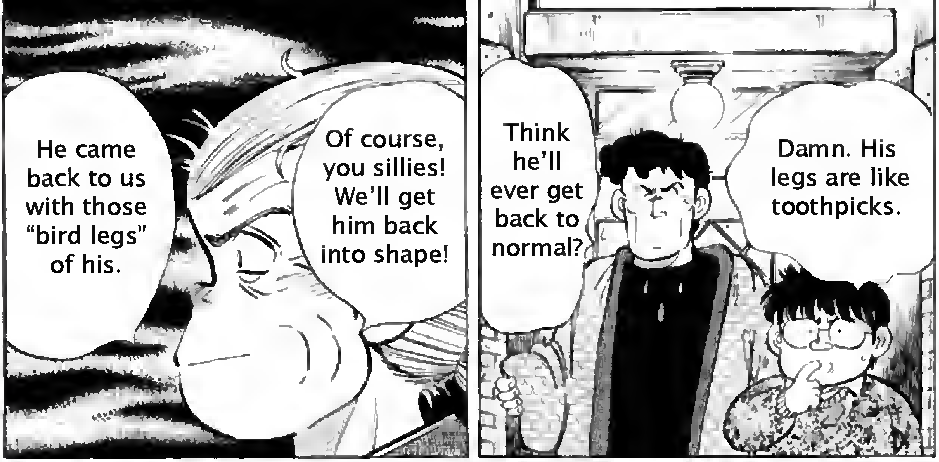
Not with these bird legs.
No matter how reckless I wanna be, I can't do squat.

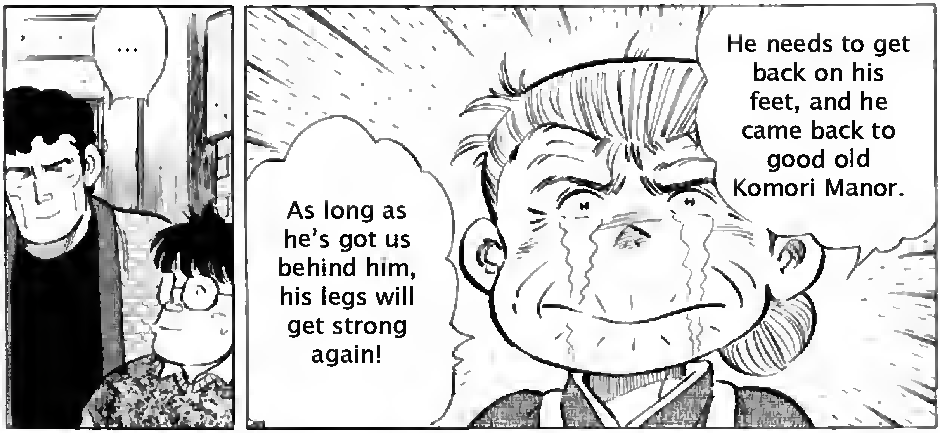
GULP
...


Thanks, Granny.
Tamotsu, take the rice balls along!

HA HA HA
はっはっは
All I can do is walk for now!
See ya later.
WOBBLE
ぐらり

MATERIAL
Aren't you going with him, Junko!?
SHOVE

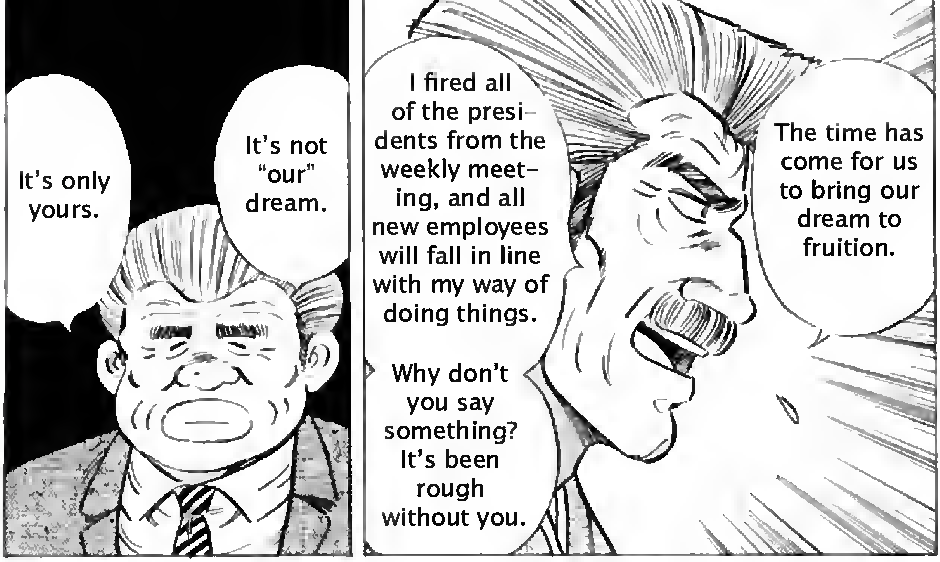

He came back to us with those "bird legs" of his.
Of course, you sillies! We'll get him back into shape!
Think he'll ever get back to normal?
Damn. His legs are like toothpicks.

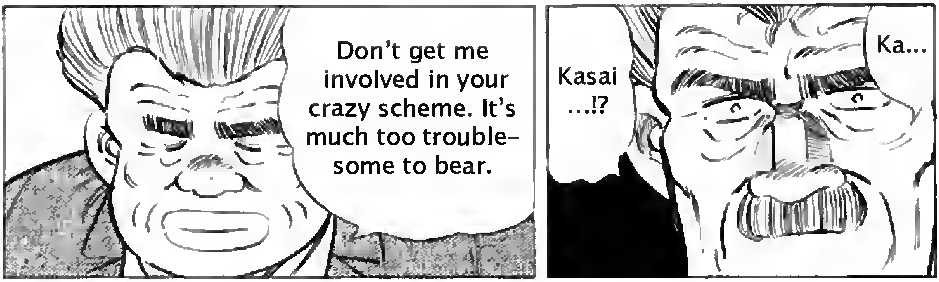

...
As long as he's got us behind him, his legs will get strong again!
He needs to get back on his feet, and he came back to good old Komori Manor.

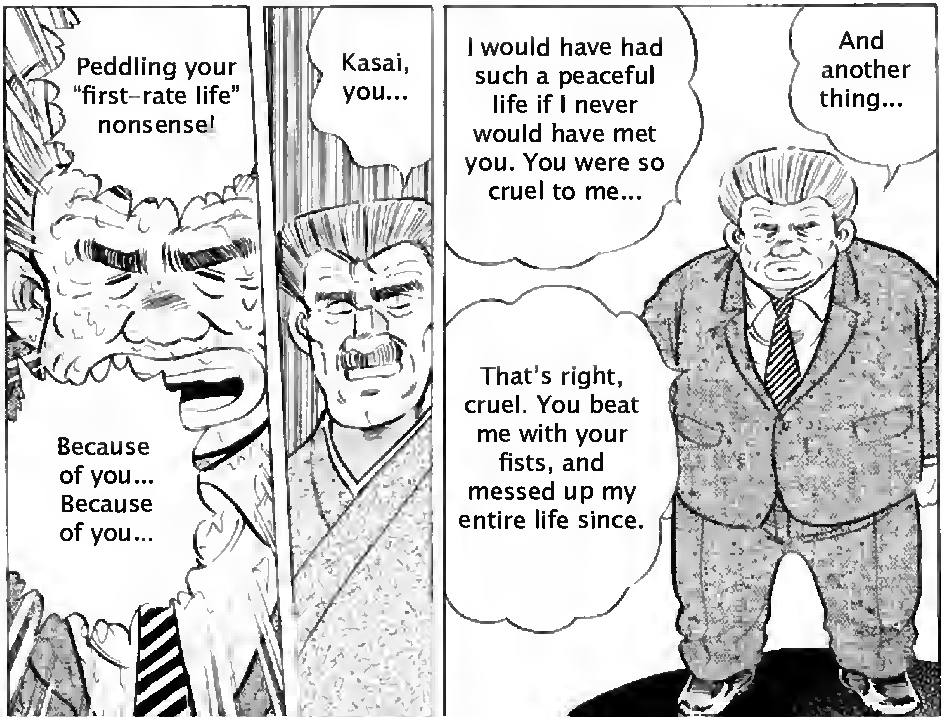
HAWK STAR
!
WOBBLE
…

Yeah.
Are you okay?
Only God knows what the new year has in store.
Jean Alesi is series champion of the 1989 European International F3000. Gunma Akagi was leading the pack during the first half of the season, but due to a tragic accident at the Birmingham Circuit, he was unable to continue racing, pushing him back into fifth place overall.
ガシッ
GRIP
MATERIAL

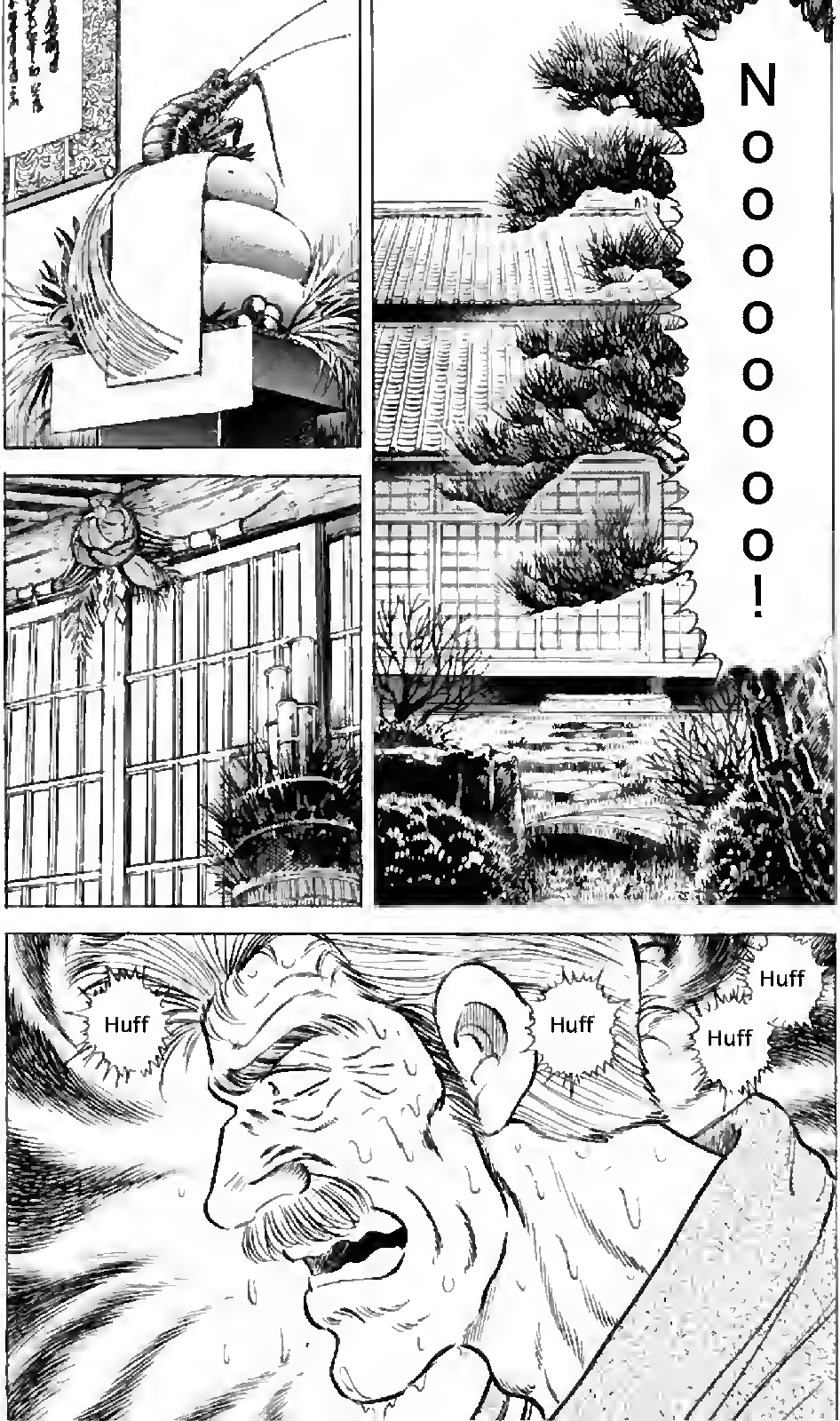
Kasai...
Where have you been all this time?
You've finally come back.


It's only yours.
It's not "our" dream.
I fired all of the presidents from the weekly meeting, and all new employees will fall in line with my way of doing things.
Why don't you say something? It's been rough without you.
The time has come for us to bring our dream to fruition.

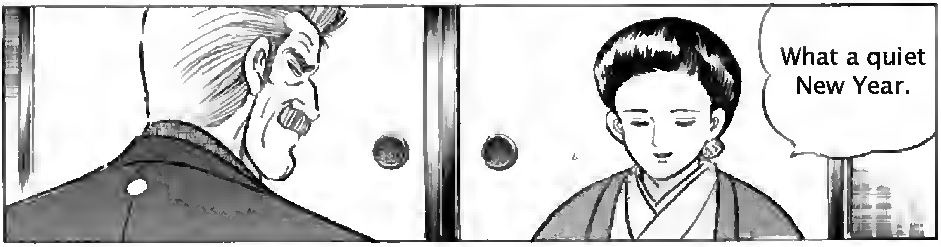

Don't get me involved in your crazy scheme. It's much too troublesome to bear.
Kasai ...!?
Ka...

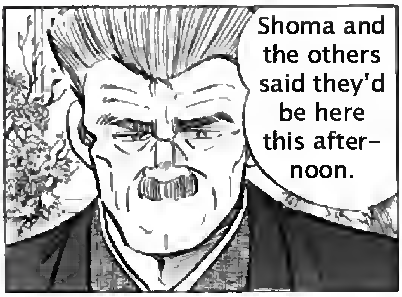

Peddling your "first-rate life" nonsense!
Because of you... Because of you...
Kasai, you...
I would have had such a peaceful life if I never would have met you. You were so cruel to me...
That's right, cruel. You beat me with your fists, and messed up my entire life since.
And another thing...

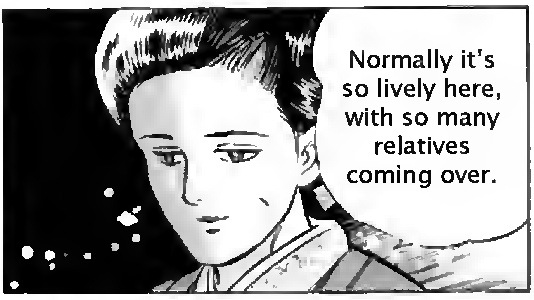
GULUL
GULUL
GULUL
This is what I've become!
GULUL
GULUL
GULUL
GULUL

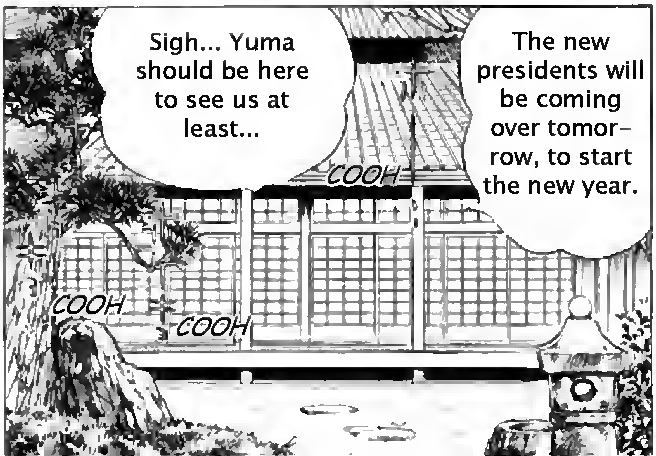

NOOOOOOOO!
Huff
Huff
Huff
Huff

COOH
COOH
COOH
COOH
COOH


What a quiet New Year.

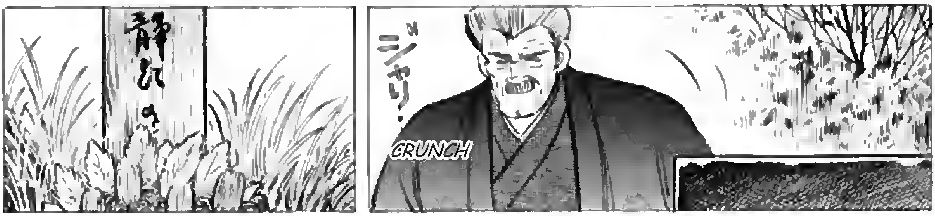

Shoma and the others said they'd be here this afternoon.


Normally it's so lively here, with so many relatives coming over.


Sigh... Yuma should be here to see us at least...
The new presidents will be coming over tomorrow, to start the new year.
COOH
COOH
COOH

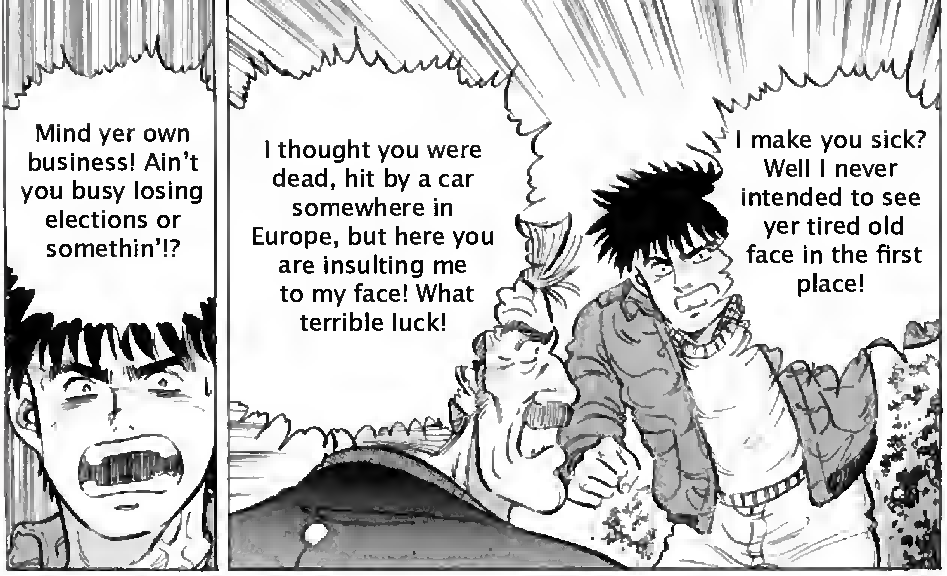
I see.
TUNK
コト…

赤木家之墓
Here Lies the
Akagi Family


静かな
ニヤリ
CRUNCH

Hm? New flow-ers...?
Who's there!?
ガサ!
RUSTLE
...
Gunma
...

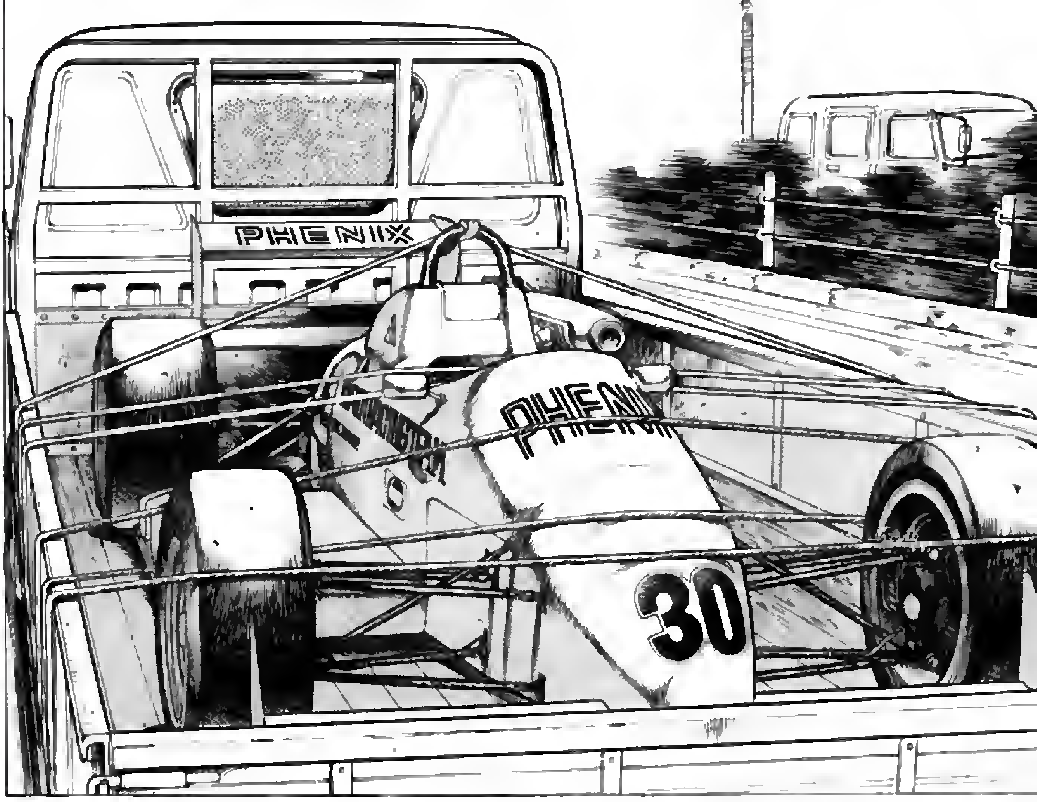
Why are you creeping around like a thief, you idiot!
Thought I'd come see Mama's grave for the New Year.
Well this is awkward.
You must be gettin' senile, pops...
Nobody's creepin'. I've just been standing here.
You have no right to call me that!
I cut off all ties with you.
You make me sick, and you've ruined my New Year!
Get lost!
Mr. Soichiro, sir.
Geez, chill out...

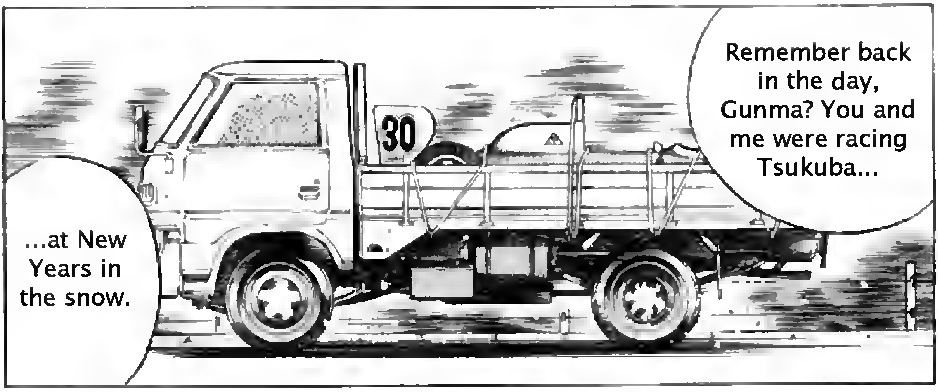

Mind yer own business! Ain't you busy losing elections or somethin'!?
I thought you were dead, hit by a car somewhere in Europe, but here you are insulting me to my face! What terrible luck!
I make you sick? Well I never intended to see yer tired old face in the first place!

You're the big fat loser, not me!
You're the same loser you've always been!

CLENCH

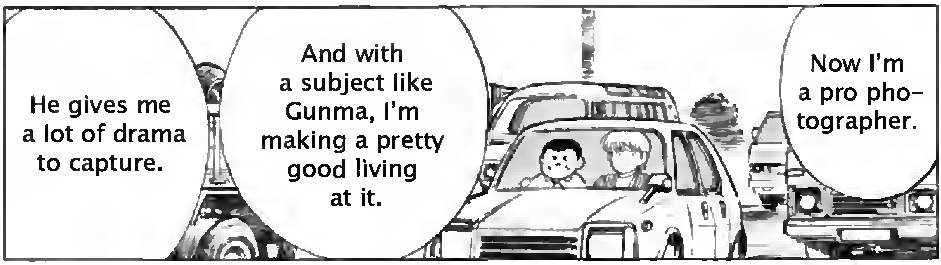
Chapter 7:
The Blueprint

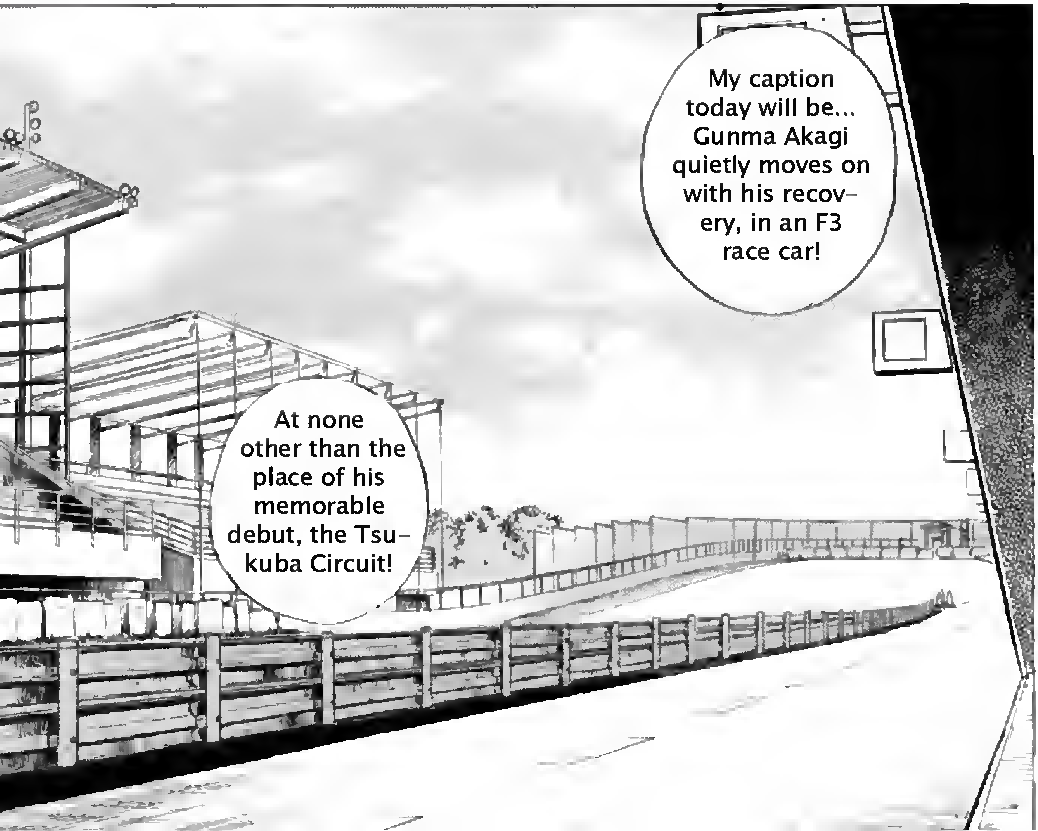

PHENIX
30


30
Remember back in the day, Gunma? You and me were racing Tsukuba...
...at New Years in the snow.

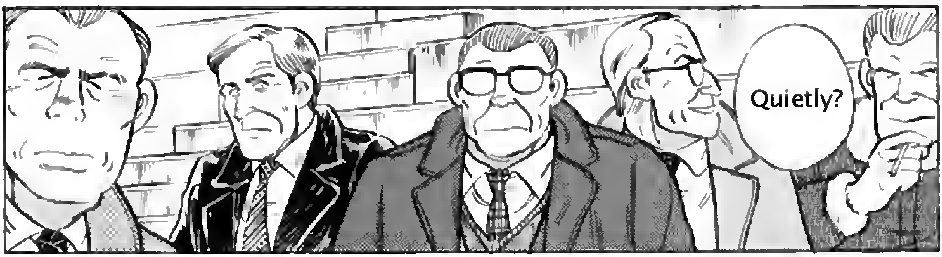
That's why I decided to give up racing.
Yup.

...
In fact, I'm actually thankful!
Heck no!
Don't tell me you're still bitter, Goro.


He gives me a lot of drama to capture.
And with a subject like Gunma, I'm making a pretty good living at it.
Now I'm a pro photographer.

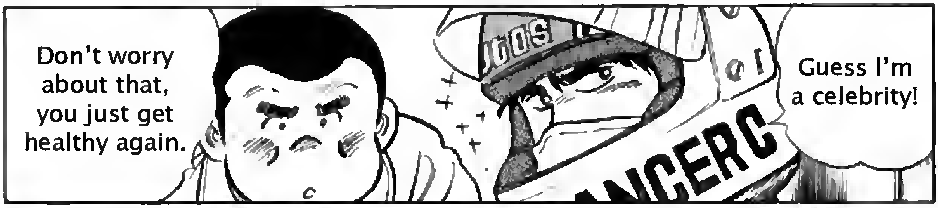

My caption today will be... Gunma Akagi quietly moves on with his recovery, in an F3 race car!
At none other than the place of his memorable debut, the Tsukuba Circuit!

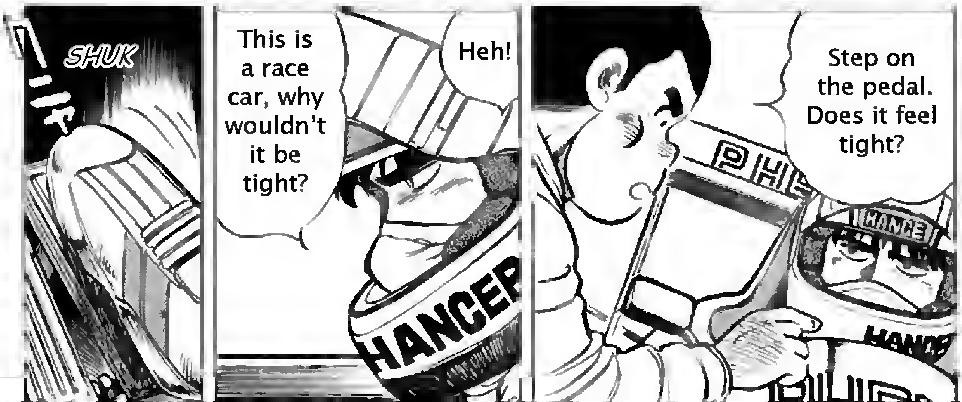
YAK
YAK
YAK


Quietly?

Well, maybe not quietly. I guess we've gotta expect a storm of reporters, as famous as you are.
SNAP
SNAP
YAK YAK
You gotta be kidding me, Goro.
YAK
YAK
BOSS

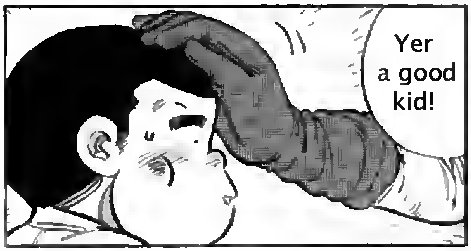
Sponsors, important people in the racing industry...
Everyone's curious how you'll turn out this year.
And it doesn't stop at the press. All sorts of people are showing up.
PHENIX
30
PHENIX


Don't worry about that, you just get healthy again.
Guess I'm a celebrity!

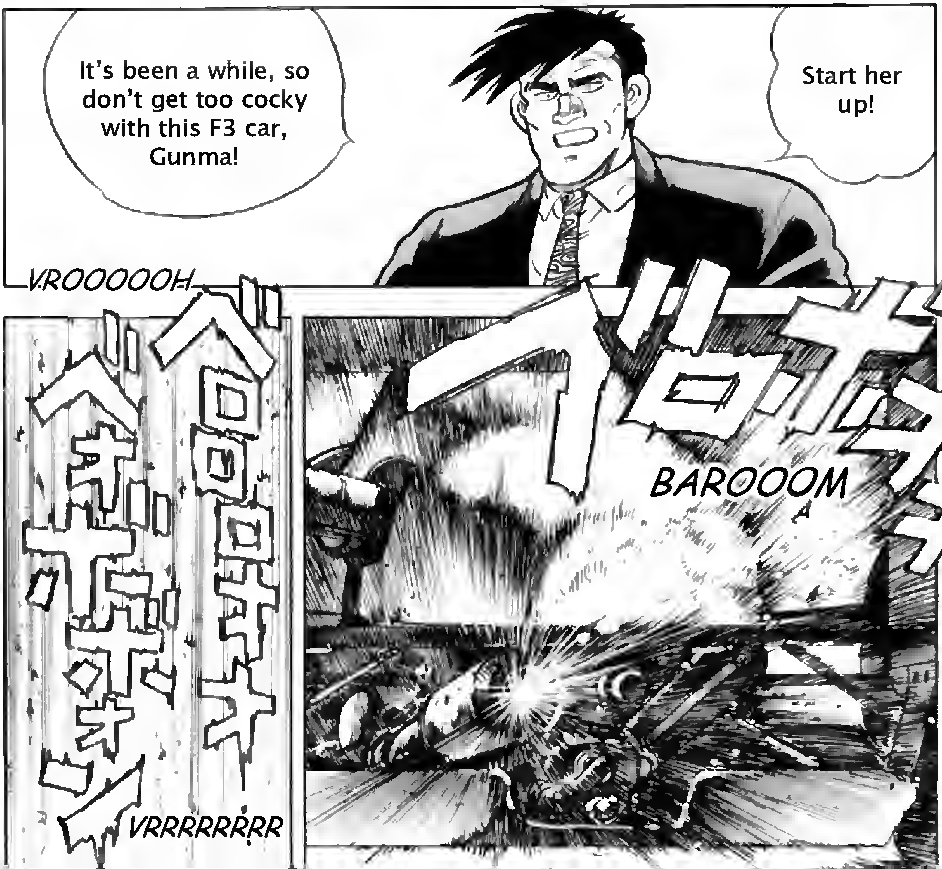

SHUK
This is a race car, why wouldn't it be tight?
Heh!
Step on the pedal. Does it feel tight?

Is it still tight?
I loosened it up the best I could, to make it easier on your legs.

What did you do?
Well?

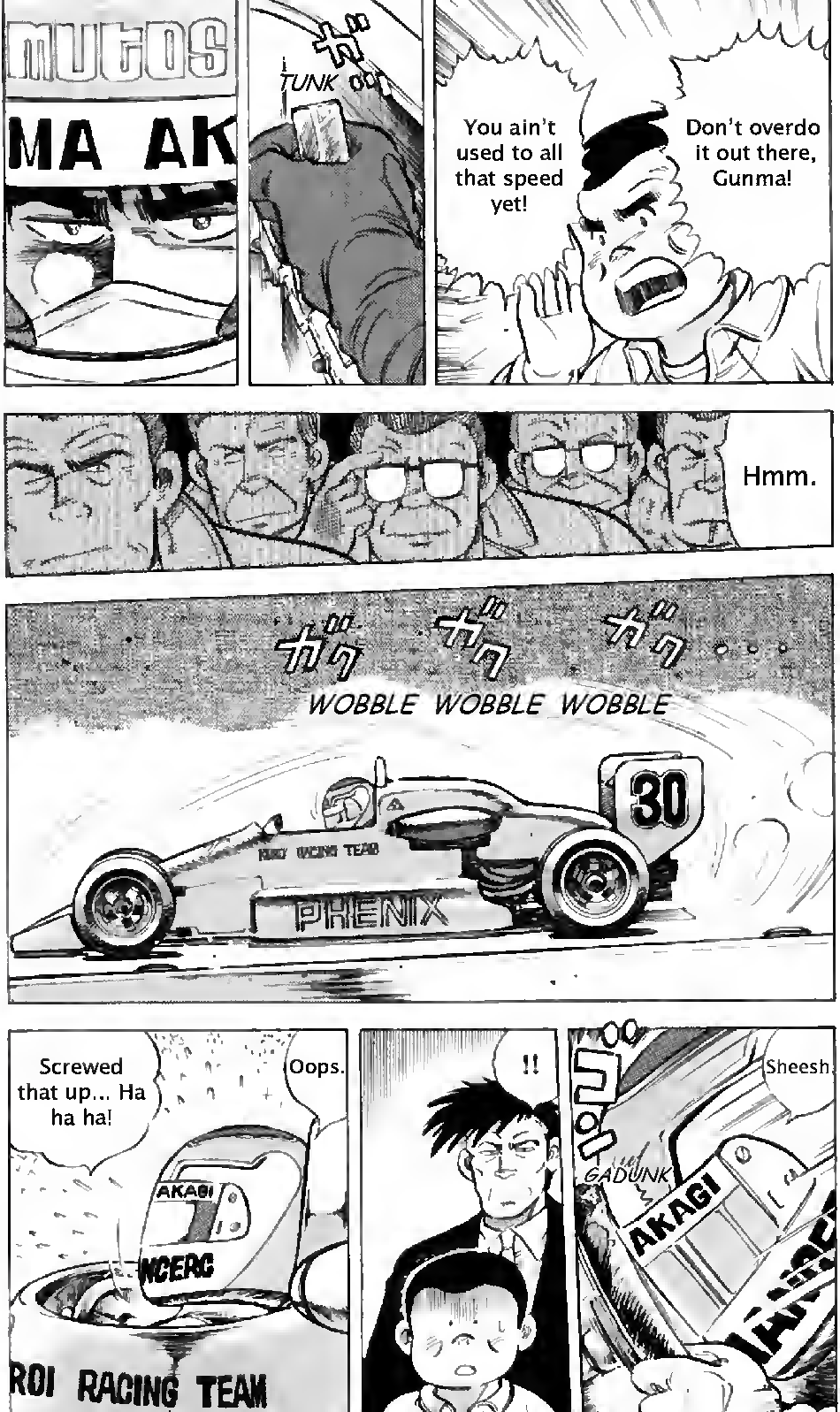

Yer a good kid!

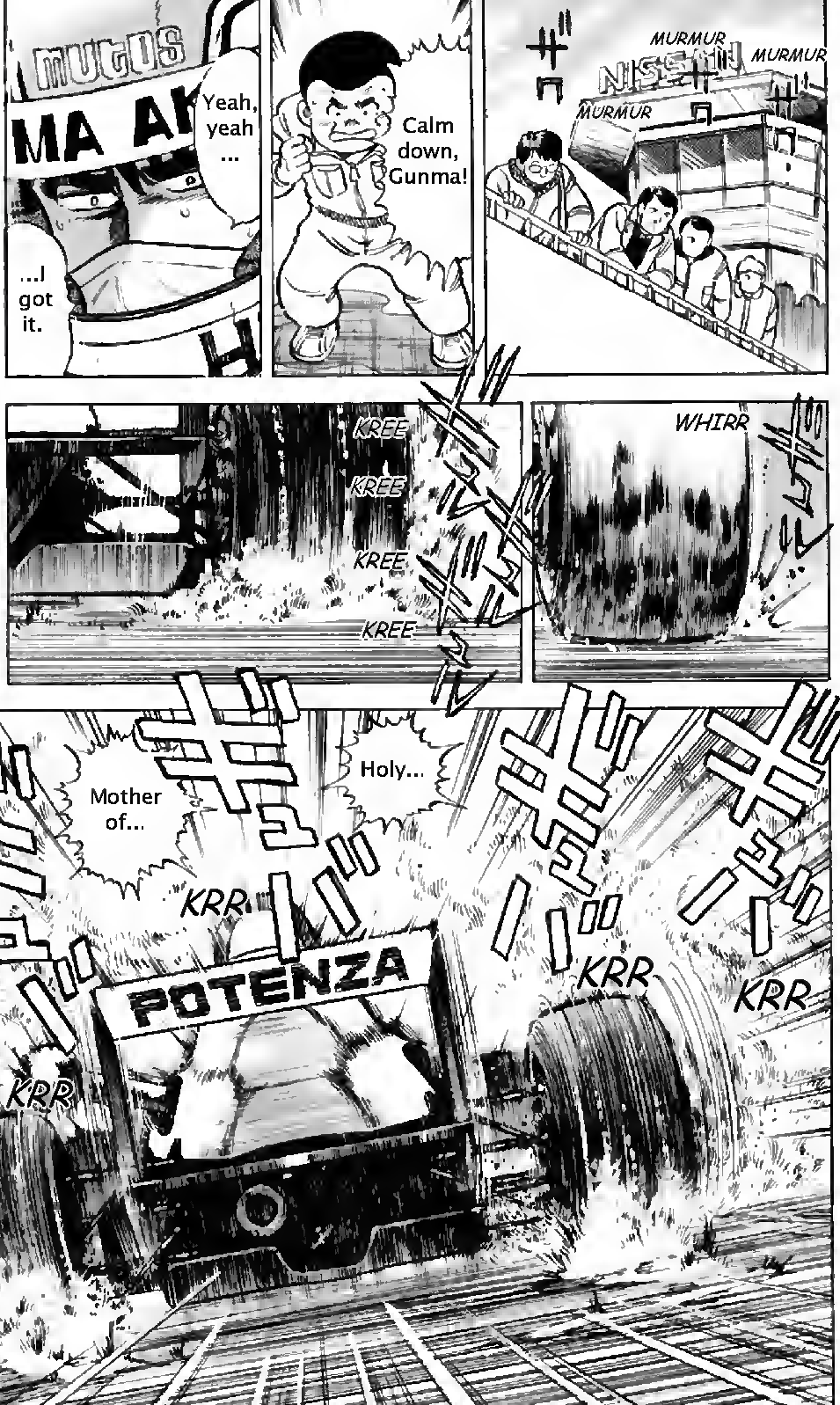
Smooth as butter!

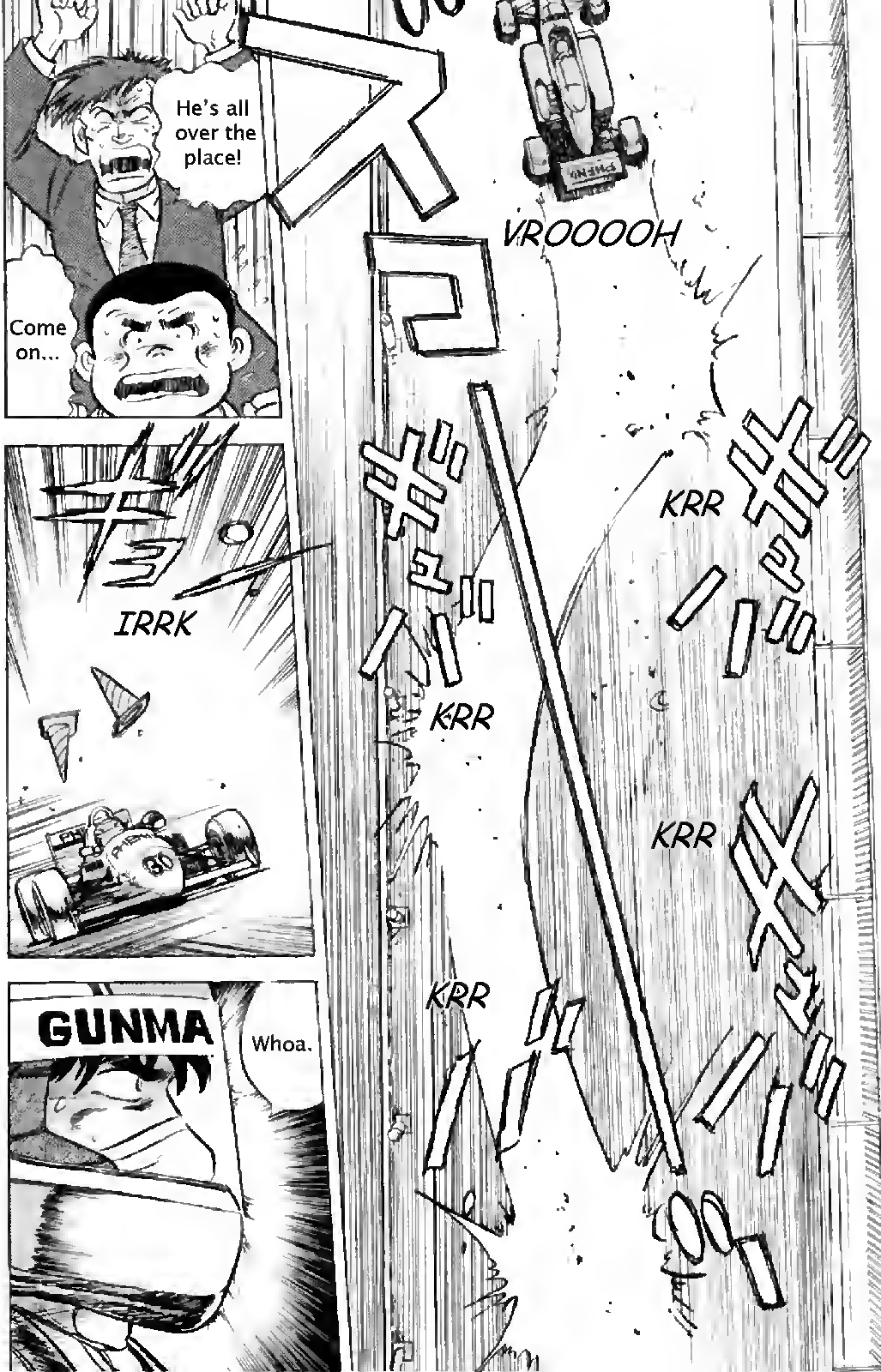

It's been a while, so don't get too cocky with this F3 car, Gunma!
Start her up!
VROOOOOH
VRRRRRRRR
BAROOOM

VROOM
VRRRRRRRR
BREHH
VROOOOOH

There it is.
The sound I been missin'.


MUTOS
MA AK
TUNK
You ain't used to all that speed yet!
Don't overdo it out there, Gunma!
Hmm.
WOBBLE WOBBLE WOBBLE
30
PHENIX
Screwed that up... Ha ha ha!
Oops.
AKAGI
ROI RACING TEAM
!!
Sheesh.
GADUNK
AKAGI

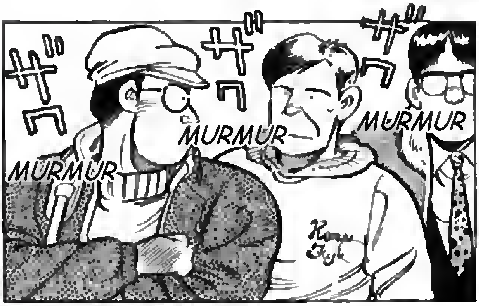

MUGUS
MA AR
Yeah, yeah ...
...I got it.
Calm down, Gunma!
MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR
KREE
KREE
KREE
KREE
WHIRR
Mother of...
Holy...
KRR
KRR
KRR
KRR
POTENZA

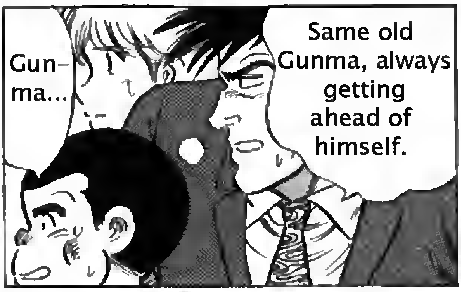

He's all over the place!
Come on...
VROOOOH
KRR
KRR
KRR
KRR
IRRK
GUNMA
Whoa.

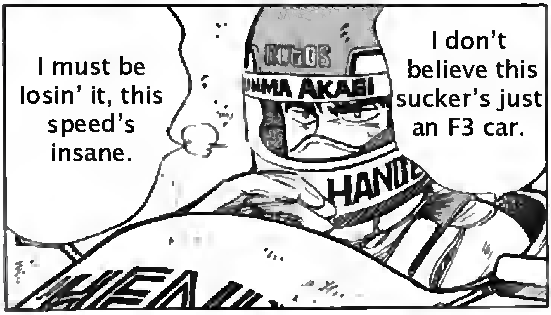
YAH
ROOOOOOH

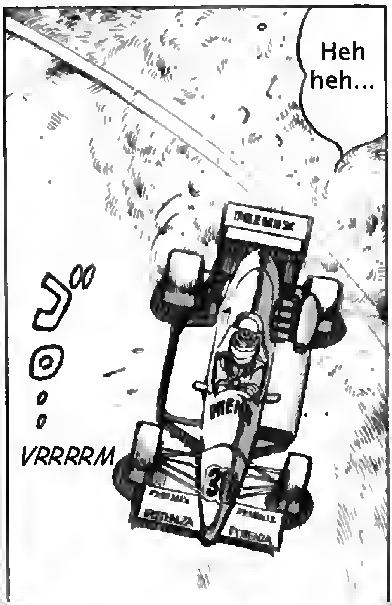
ZSSHHH

GUNMA AKAGI
No freakin' way!


MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR

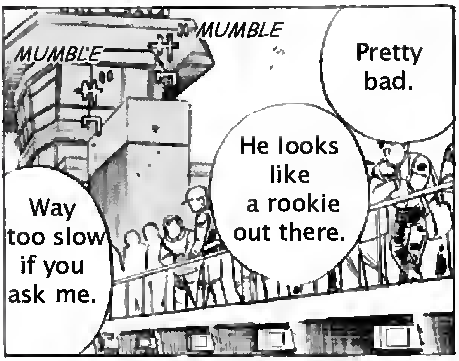

Gun-ma...
Same old Gunma, always getting ahead of himself.

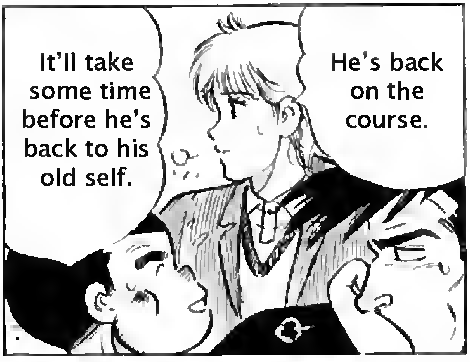

I must be losin' it, this speed's insane.
I don't believe this sucker's just an F3 car.


Heh heh...
VRRRRM

AKAGI
Was I really drivin' this fast before?

This is nuts.
My hands are clammy...
AGI
ERC


MUMBLE
MUMBLE
Pretty bad.
He looks like a rookie out there.
Way too slow if you ask me.

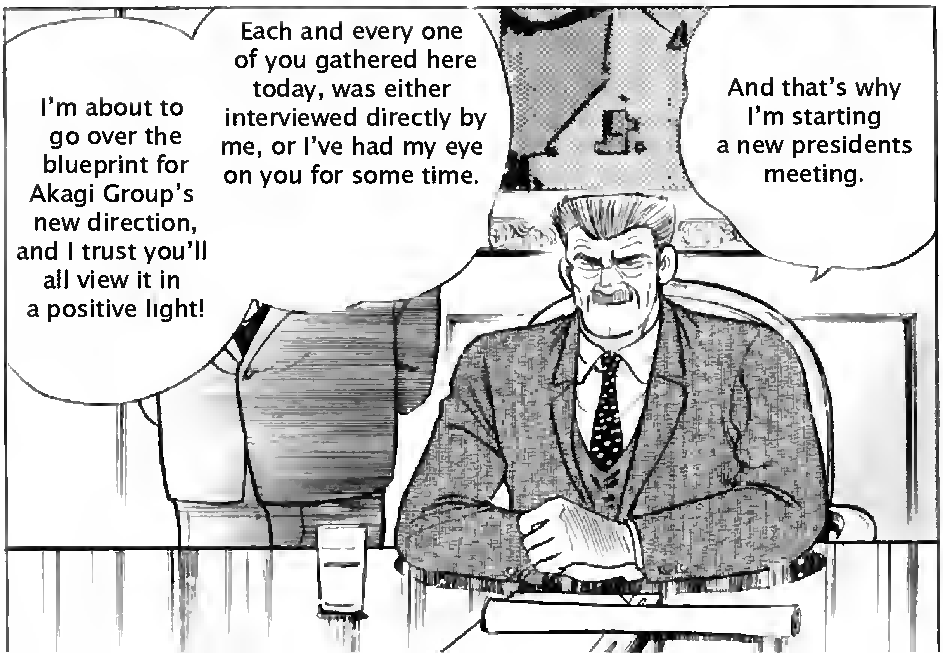

It'll take some time before he's back to his old self.
He's back on the course.

What happened to that contract he was under in England?
So he was fired!?
It should've gone to the end of last year, but I think they'll wait for his recovery before considering any extensions.
I wouldn't doubt it.
After all that...

PAT
Doesn't look like he'll make it this year.
He's still an injured man. We're wasting our time.
How about watching a little longer?
?
You're the sponsors, aren't you?
...but he'll need at least 10 laps to get his rhythm back.
Sorry to keep you out in the cold...
And it's cold out here.
Five laps is enough for me. He's no good.
!?
VREHHH

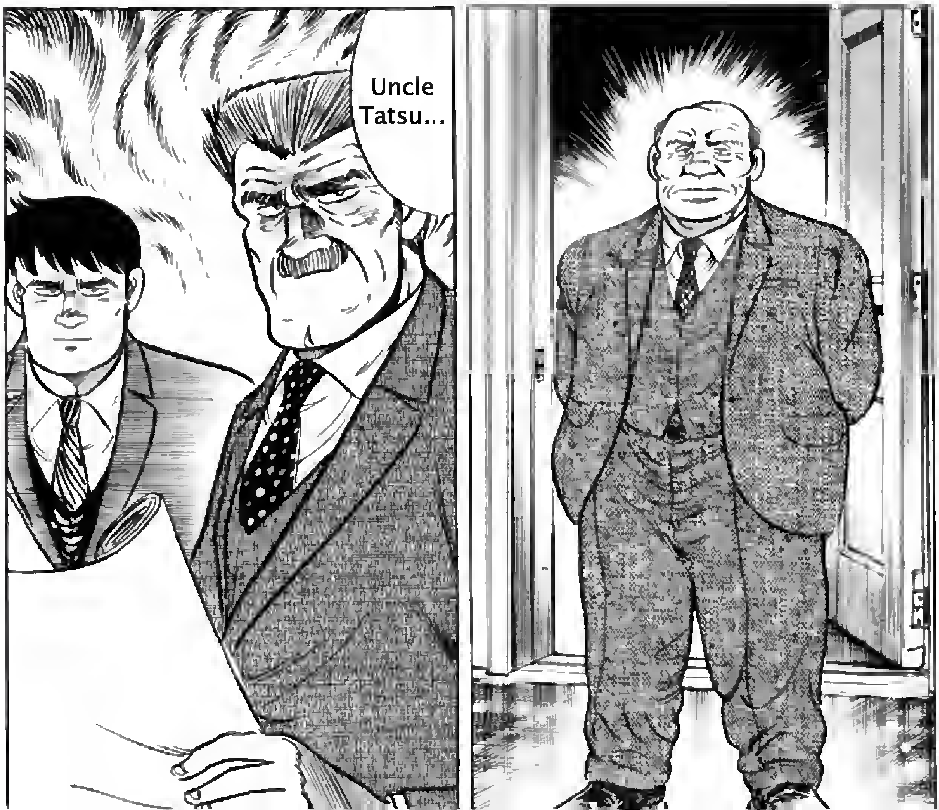
VROOOOOOOOOH

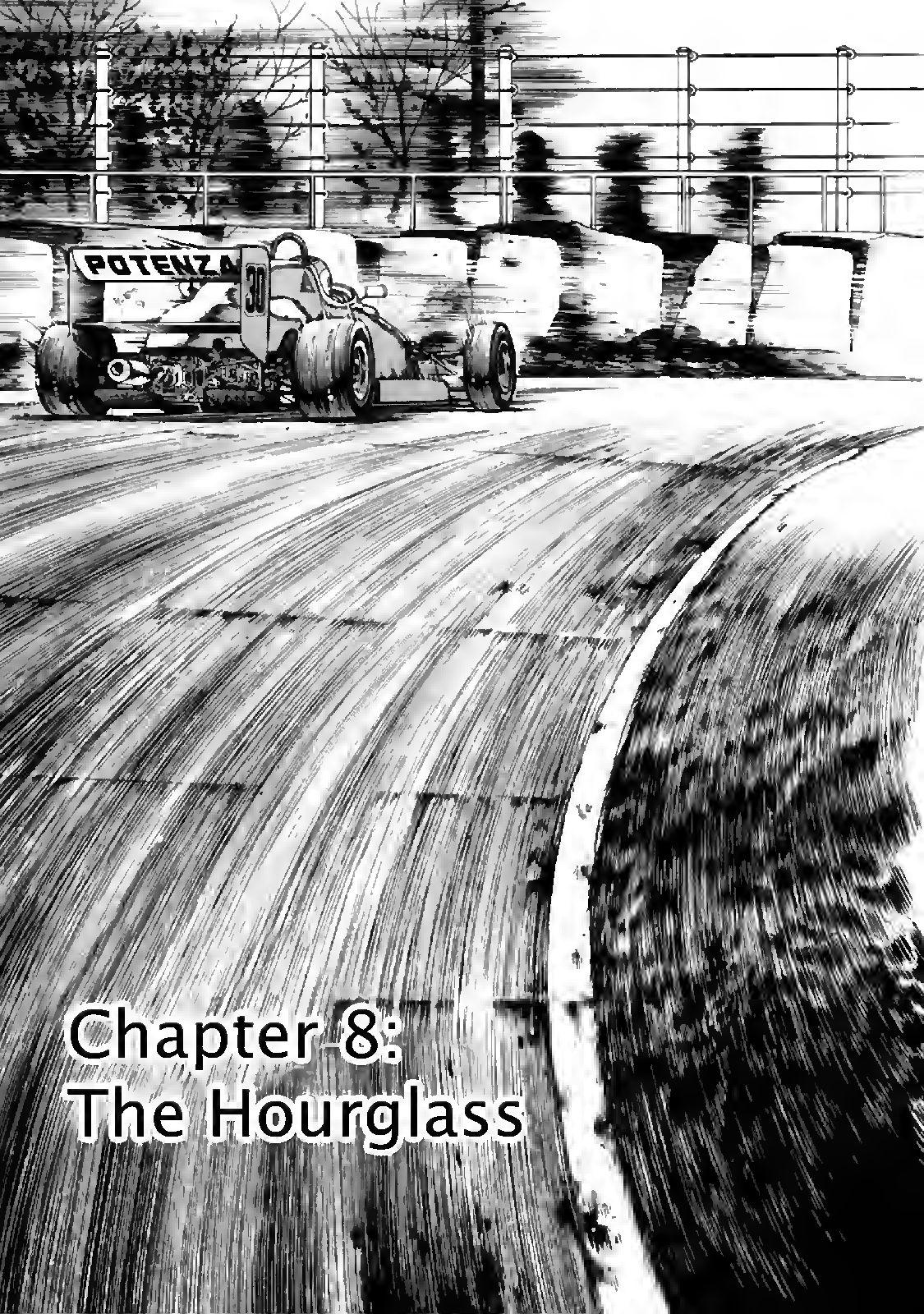
...that man who just flew across the home straight like an F1 racer is...
So then...
N...No...
What the... Is there another car out there?
In only six laps.
Look at that.
...
KUROI RACING TEAM
STARE
...too slow!
Still...


I'm about to go over the blueprint for Akagi Group's new direction, and I trust you'll all view it in a positive light!
Each and every one of you gathered here today, was either interviewed directly by me, or I've had my eye on you for some time.
And that's why I'm starting a new presidents meeting.

So let's get started with this.
SHOOK

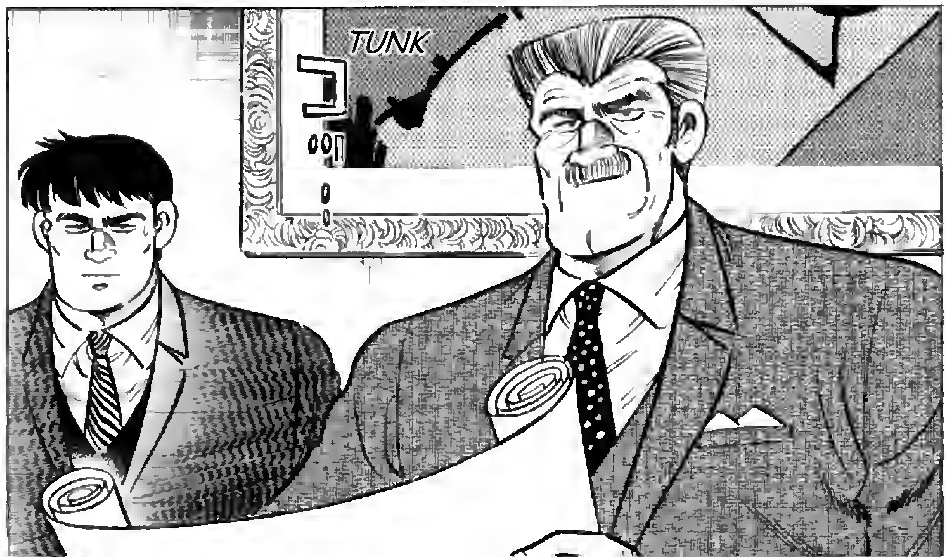
Hold your horses, Soichiro!
SLAM


Uncle Tatsu...



Chapter 8: The Hourglass

TUNK


TUNK

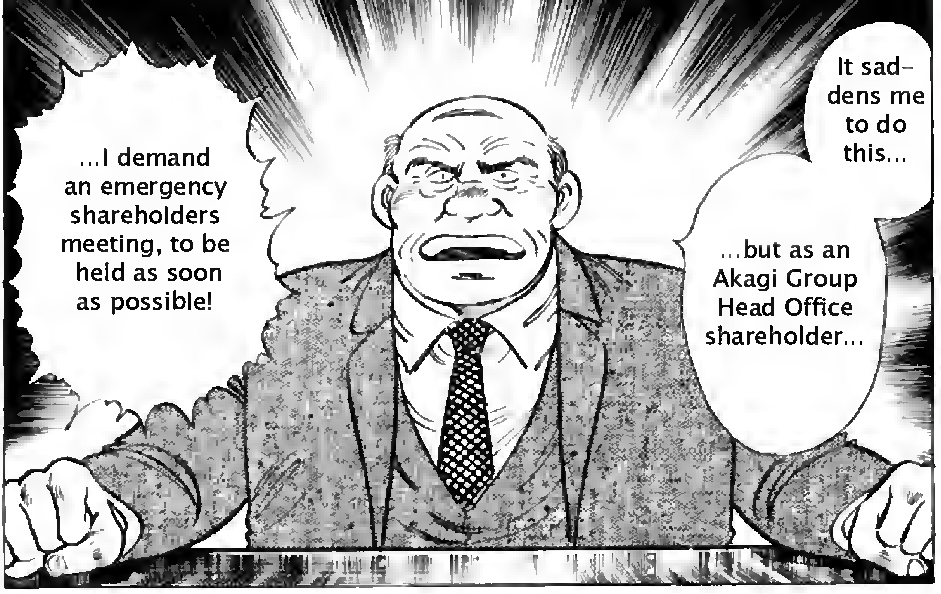
It's up to you if you want to hold this "new presidents meeting" in secret...
...but this group has no right to determine what needs to be done about the core issues facing Akagi Group!
Such a one-sided move on your part is unacceptable.
Just hold on a moment.
...is none other than the Wednesday Meeting group of presidents! Never forget this, Soichiro!
The central organization responsible for Akagi Group's activities...
CHATTER
CHATTER
I had all members of the Wednesday Meeting step down as chairmen and advisors.
And Akagi Group's new core is right here in front of you, the New Presidents Meeting!
I'm going to have to ask you to leave, Mr. Tagawa.
This isn't your place to bark.

Move aside, I'm sitting down.
There we go...
I refuse to allow that.
Companies are not run by any one individual. Functioning under such tyranny...
...would render Akagi Group incapable of meeting its social responsibilities.
And besides...
I'd like to know...
...why on earth didn't you call me in!? I still haven't stepped down!
Now that you've dismissed all members of the Wednesday Meeting, and plan to implement the people of this New Presidents Meeting as representative directors...
Deal with me!?
My intention was to deal with you today.

You sir...
...
...Soi-chiro!?
And just what is that supposed to mean...
...are sus-pected of murder!
Keh heh heh...
My, my...
D-Dad!
Of at least two, maybe four people.
CHATTER
CHATTER

And just who is it that you're accusing me of killing?
Well that was unexpected. I was wondering what you'd come up with in a fit of desperation.
Pfff! Ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha ha!
But to accuse me of murder... Ha ha ha!
!?
First of all, Yuki.
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
And after that, your accomplice in Yuki's murder, Mr. Kida.
...
I believe those two are still alive somewhere, but I'm certain you attempted to murder them at least.
The other two would be Kasai, and his secretary, a young girl named Yuri.

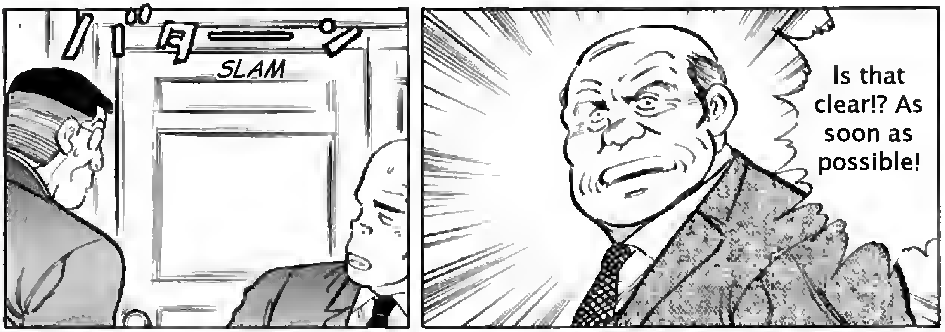
Have you completely lost your mind, Soichiro?
...and now accusing me of murder?
That is the very definition of insanity, Soichiro!
Proposing these crazy business principles...
...while trying your best to dismantle Akagi Group...
You were such a cute little guy... Blossoming into a brilliant entrepreneur... But look at what you've become...
I've known you since you were a child.
DRIP
DRIP
What has become of you?
It... saddens me greatly... Urgh...
PFFFF
It seems you want me to use my last line of defense...
...
I'll have to ask you to leave.
You're wasting my time.


...I demand an emergency shareholders meeting, to be held as soon as possible!
It sad-dens me to do this...
...but as an Akagi Group Head Office shareholder...

...

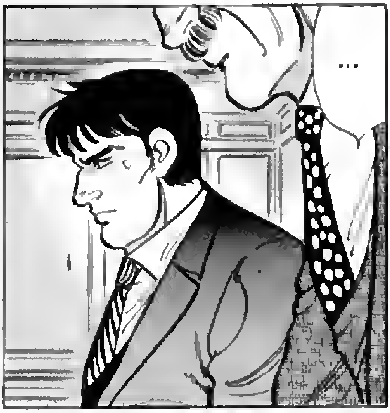
What!?
...

You're a... Head Office shareholder?
What did you just say?


SLAM
Is that clear!? As soon as possible!

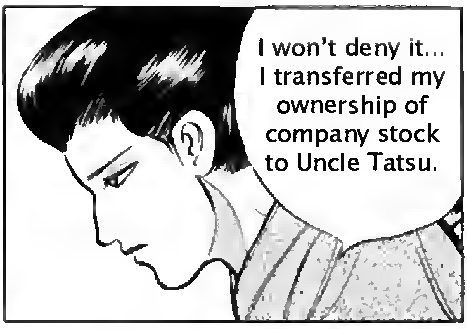
That's ridiculous!
He claims to own stock in my company!?

Plans-of-regional-development-in-Rokkasho-Village


...

Kinuko! What have you done!?

By why!? Why would you do this without consulting me first!?


I won't deny it... I transferred my ownership of company stock to Uncle Tatsu.

...!
He's family!
Don't give me that crap. Tagawa is...
Transfer of stock between family does not require any consultation with members of the board. It's written clearly in the articles of incorporation.

With you holding 30% of the stock, that was 50% between us. That's just too heavy of a burden to hold...
...and why should a dimwitted woman like myself own 20% of the Head Office? I couldn't be of any use.
Besides, you were so busy in February with the election...
Yes.
So you gave him the entire 20%!?
...he still wants to work to save Akagi Group, without any sort of grudge left in his heart.
Although Uncle Tatsu was disgraced by you in the past...
I thought you could use a little rest.
...getting revenge on me, Kinuko?
Is this your way of...

You're still thinking about her, aren't you.
I'm talking about Shizue.
Why on earth would I want revenge?
Revenge?
No she hasn't.
She's long been dead.
You're the one still thinking about her.
Ha ha ha... You stole my line.
Granted, I did bring Gunma into our house...
I've tried to give you my all.
She still lives on in your heart.

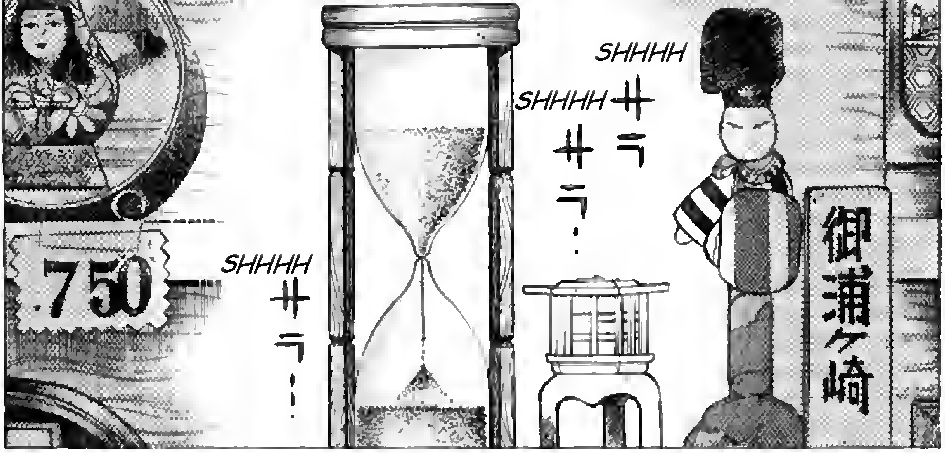
What!?
You love him the most.
More than Shoma, or Yuma.
...and cut off all ties with him!
But I kicked him out in less than three years...

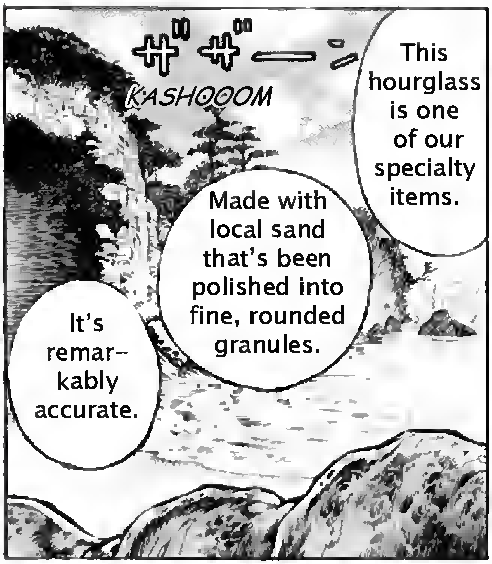
The son you had with the true love of your life.
Don't be ridiculous! Gunma is...

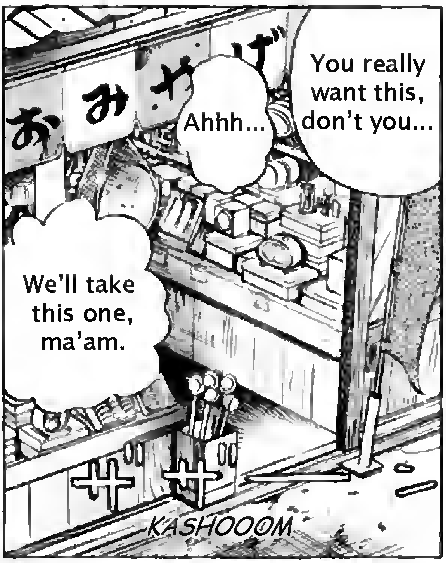
...!
You're the lion and he's your cub.
He's closer in personality to you than Shoma or Yuma.

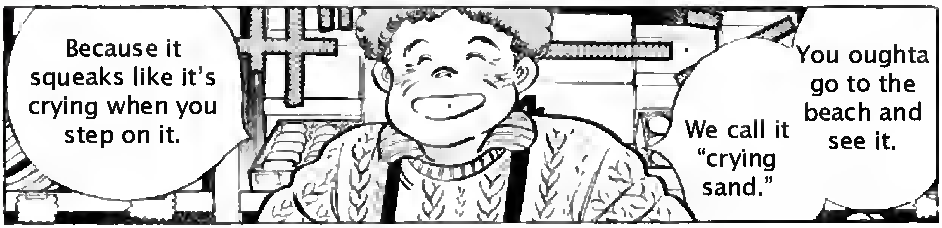
VREHHH

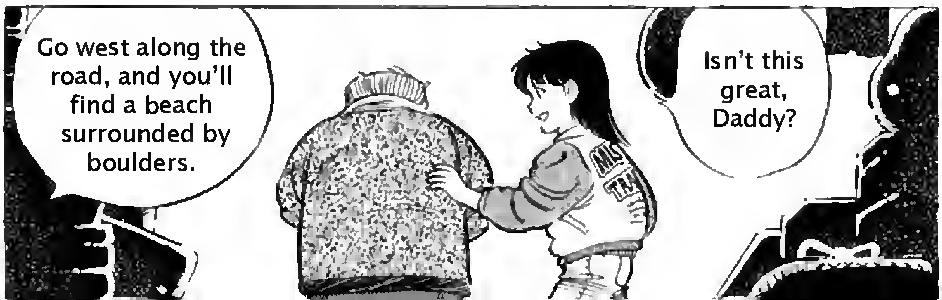
AKAGI
HANGER

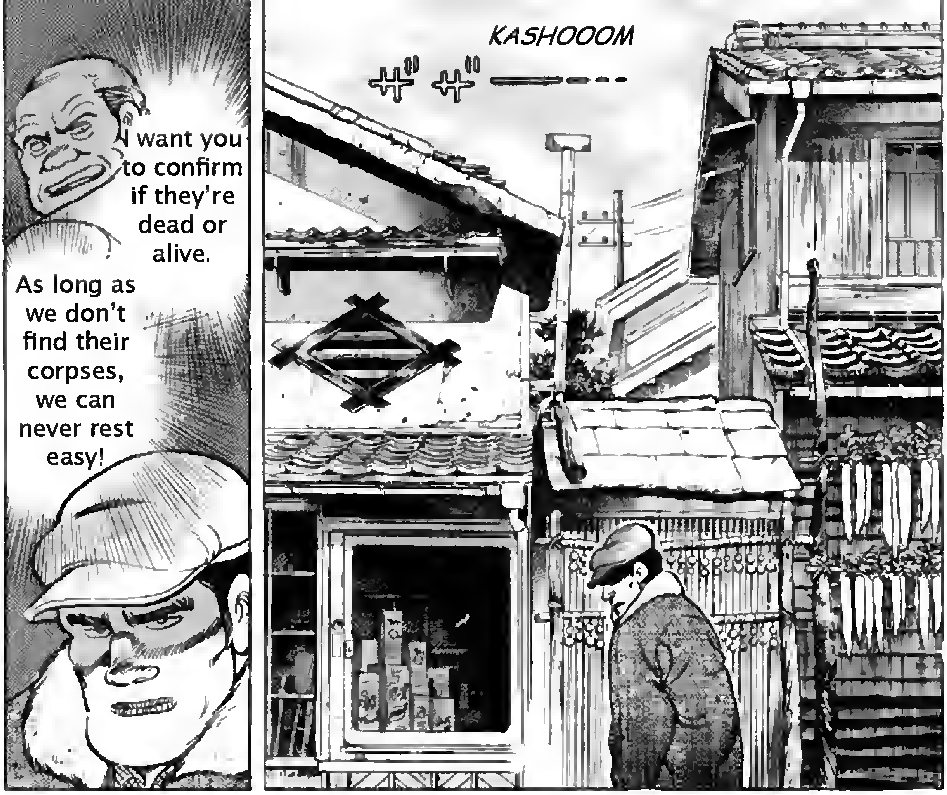

.750
SHHHH
SHHHH
SHHHH
御浦々崎

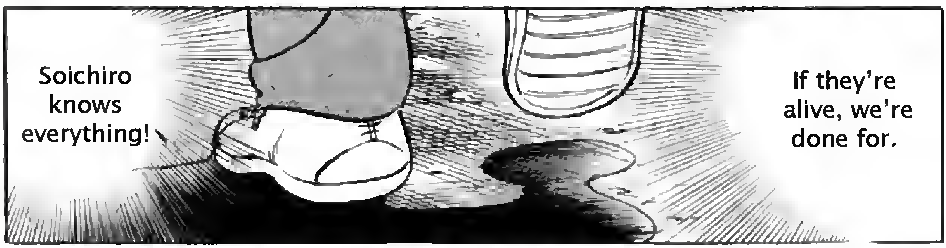

KASHOOOM
This hourglass is one of our specialty items.
Made with local sand that's been polished into fine, rounded granules.
It's remar-kably accurate.

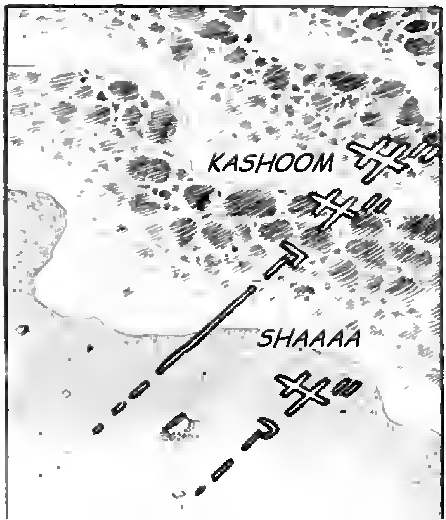

You really want this, don't you...
Ahhh...
We'll take this one, ma'am.
KASHOOOM

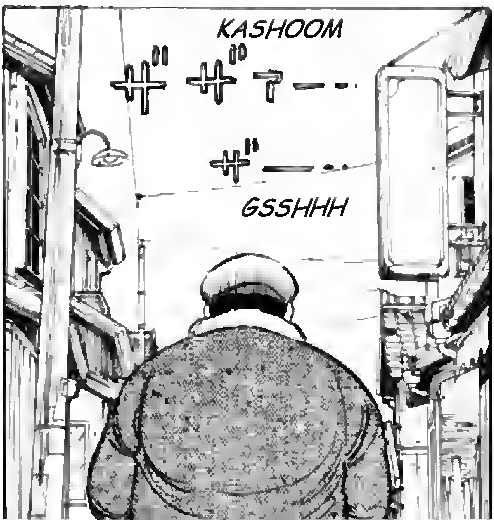

Because it squeaks like it's crying when you step on it.
We call it "crying sand."
You oughta go to the beach and see it.


Go west along the road, and you'll find a beach surrounded by boulders.
Isn't this great, Daddy?

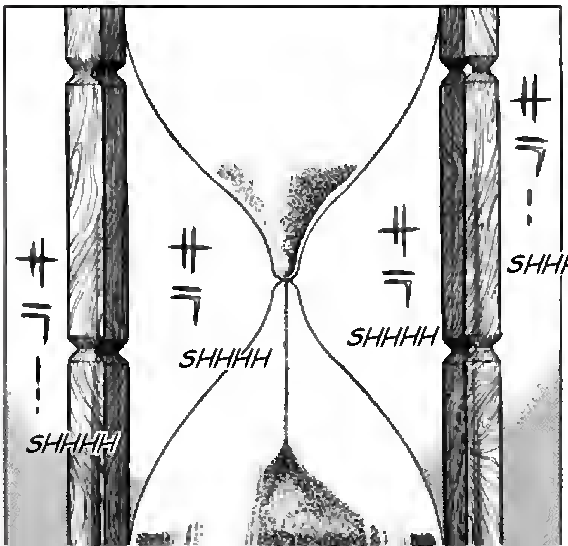

I want you to confirm if they're dead or alive.
As long as we don't find their corpses, we can never rest easy!
KASHOOOM


Soichiro knows everything!
If they're alive, we're done for.

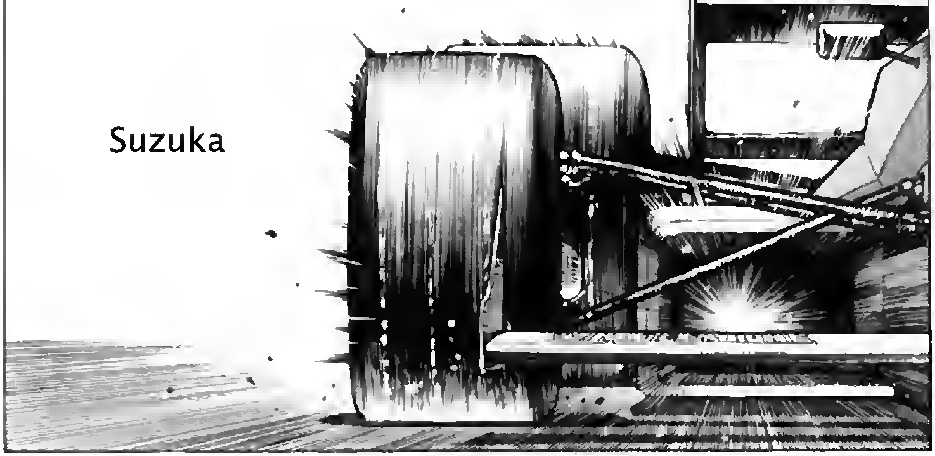

KASHOOM
SHAAAA

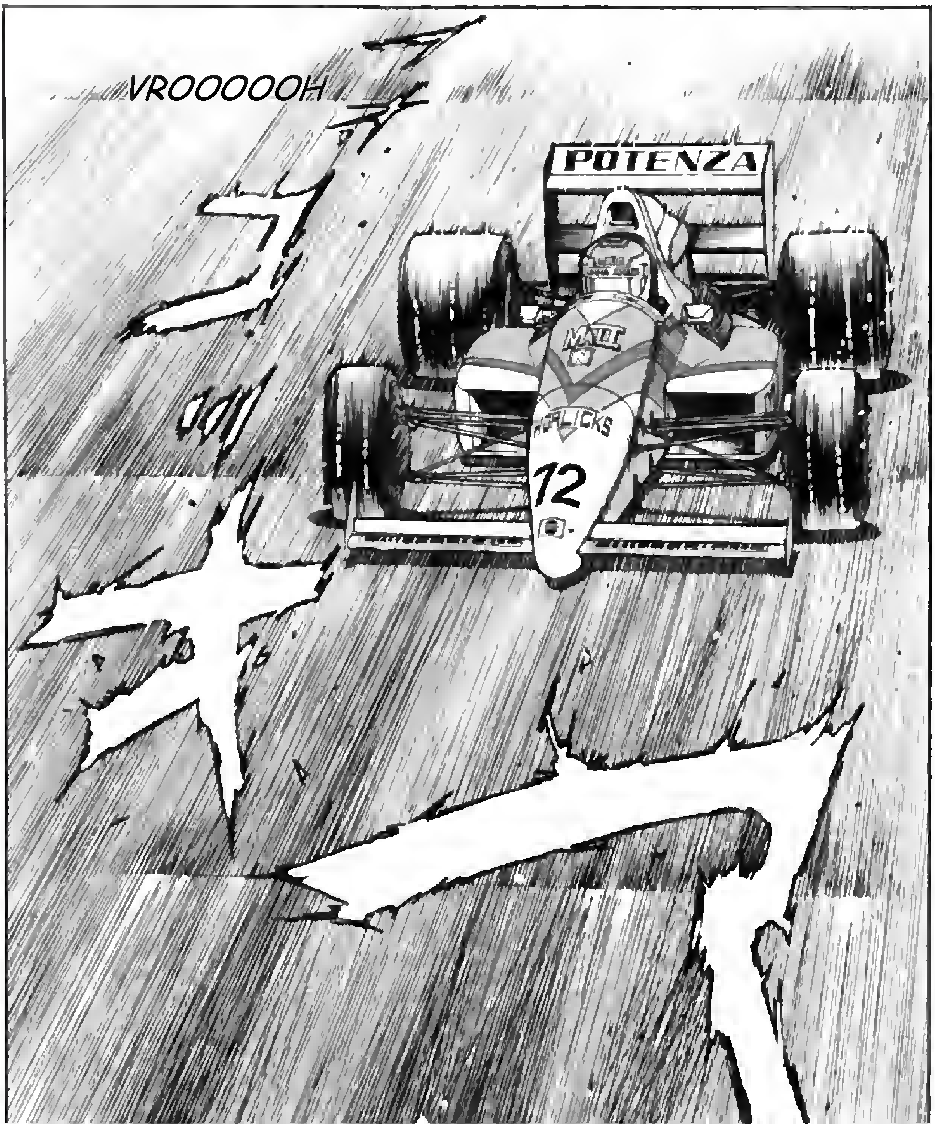

KASHOOM
GSSHHH

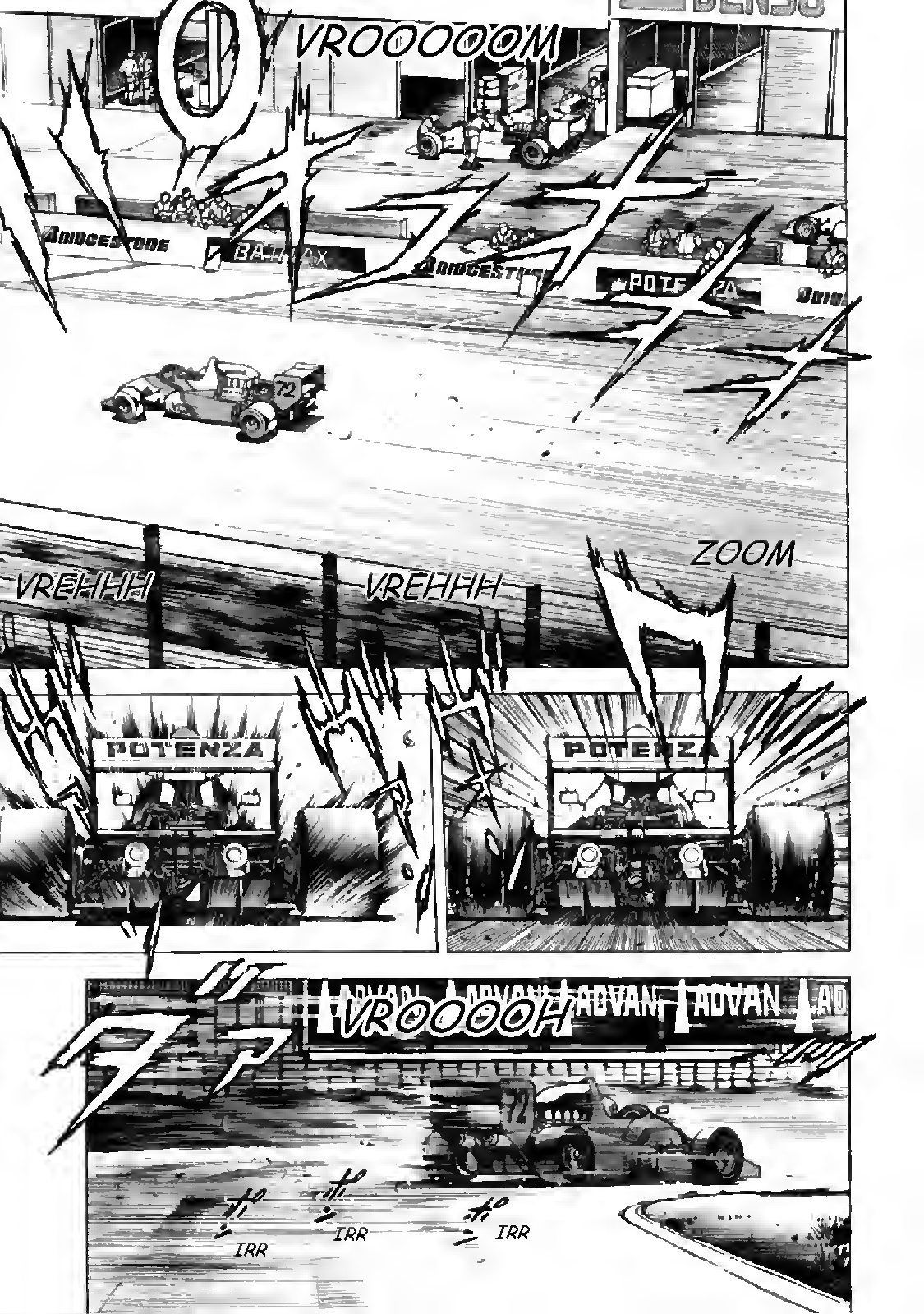
It's true! It's really crying!
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
SQUEAK

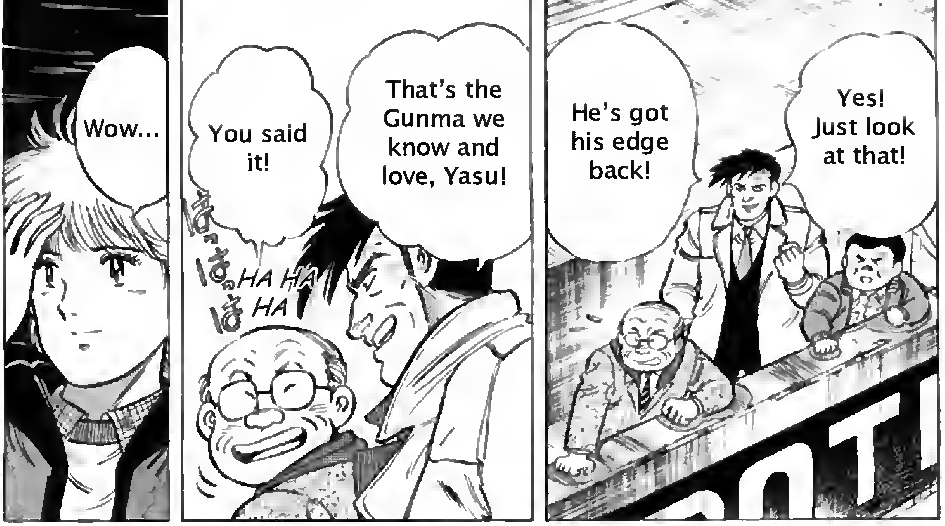

SHHHH
SHHHH
SHHHH
SHHHH

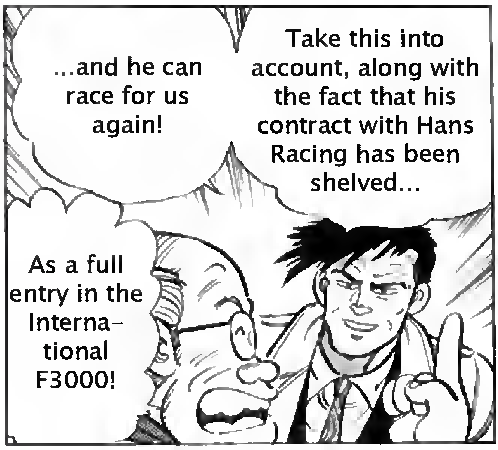
Chapter 9:
Back on Track
mutos
UNMA AKAGI
HANGERC


Suzuka

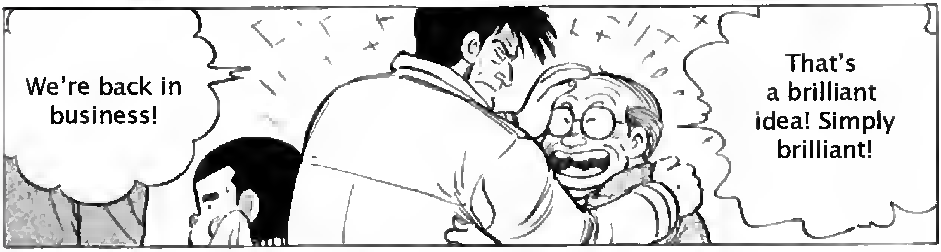

VROOOOOH
POTENZA
MATE
FLICKS
12

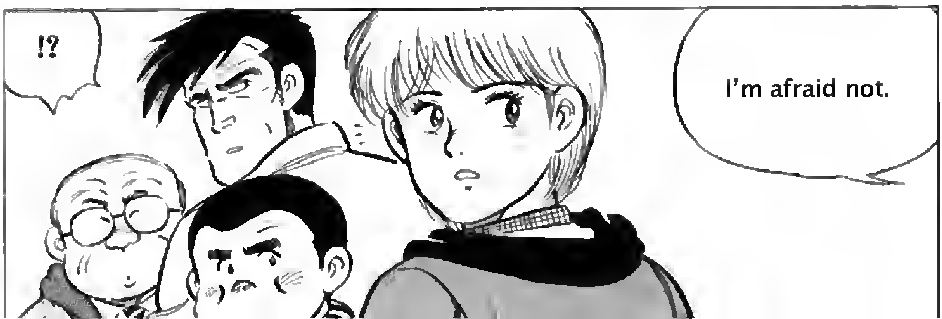

VROOOOOM
BRIDGESTONE
POTE ZA
VREHHH
VREHHH
ZOOM
POTENZA
POTENZA
VROOOOH
ADVAN
ADVAN
ADVAN
ADVAN
IRR
IRR
IRR


Wow...
You said it!
That's the Gunma we know and love, Yasu!
はっはっはHA HA HA HA
He's got his edge back!
Yes! Just look at that!


...and he can race for us again!
Take this into account, along with the fact that his contract with Hans Racing has been shelved...
As a full entry in the Interna-tional F3000!

When I saw how thin he was, I thought it would take at least a year to recover.
But it's only been a few months.

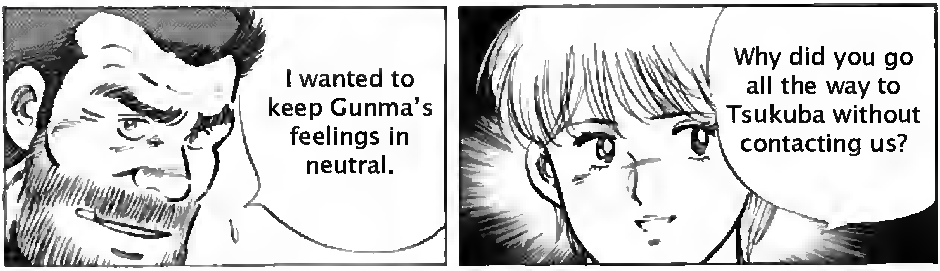

We're back in business!
That's a brilliant idea! Simply brilliant!


!?
I'm afraid not.

Oh...
Mr. Orman...!
...
CRAP
VRROOOOOH
When did you get to Japan?
NGK
DUNLOP
TRAMPIO
ASSAITS RACING TEAM
Oh... You should've gotten in touch with me earlier.
WOOSH
At the start of the new year.
ZWOOOOM
SHOEI
EX-C

And I saw Gunma driving at Tsukuba, in the F3 car.
I wanted to, but I had a lot of business to take care of with various contacts.
Oh yeah...

Mr. Orman ...
Seeing him drive today gave me the confidence I needed to get in touch with my contacts in England.
I'm impressed at how quickly he's recovered.

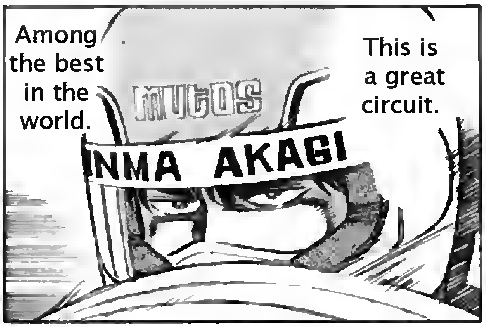

I wanted to keep Gunma's feelings in neutral.
Why did you go all the way to Tsukuba without contacting us?

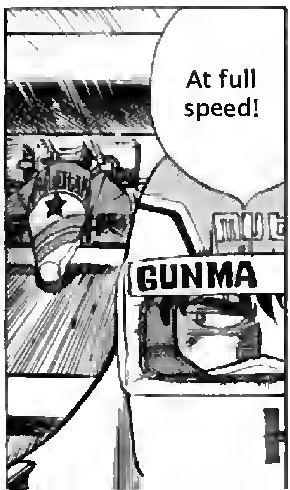
PAT
Why don't we talk about it over dinner tonight?
Neu-tral?

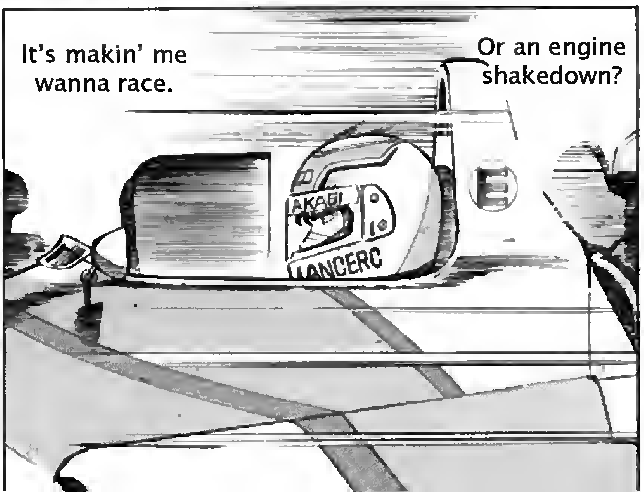
WOOSH

Good old Suzuka...

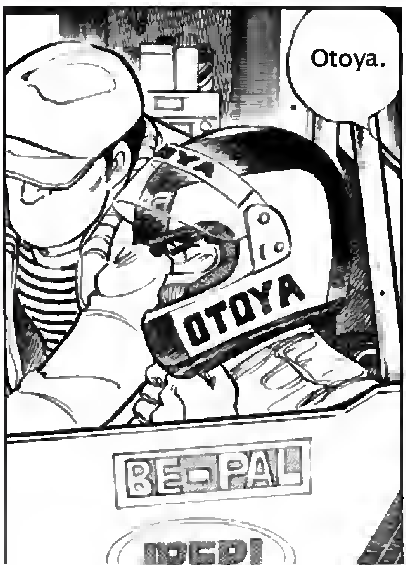
Tire test maybe?
There are a lot of cars out here for the off season.


Among the best in the world.
This is a great circuit.
NMA AKAGI

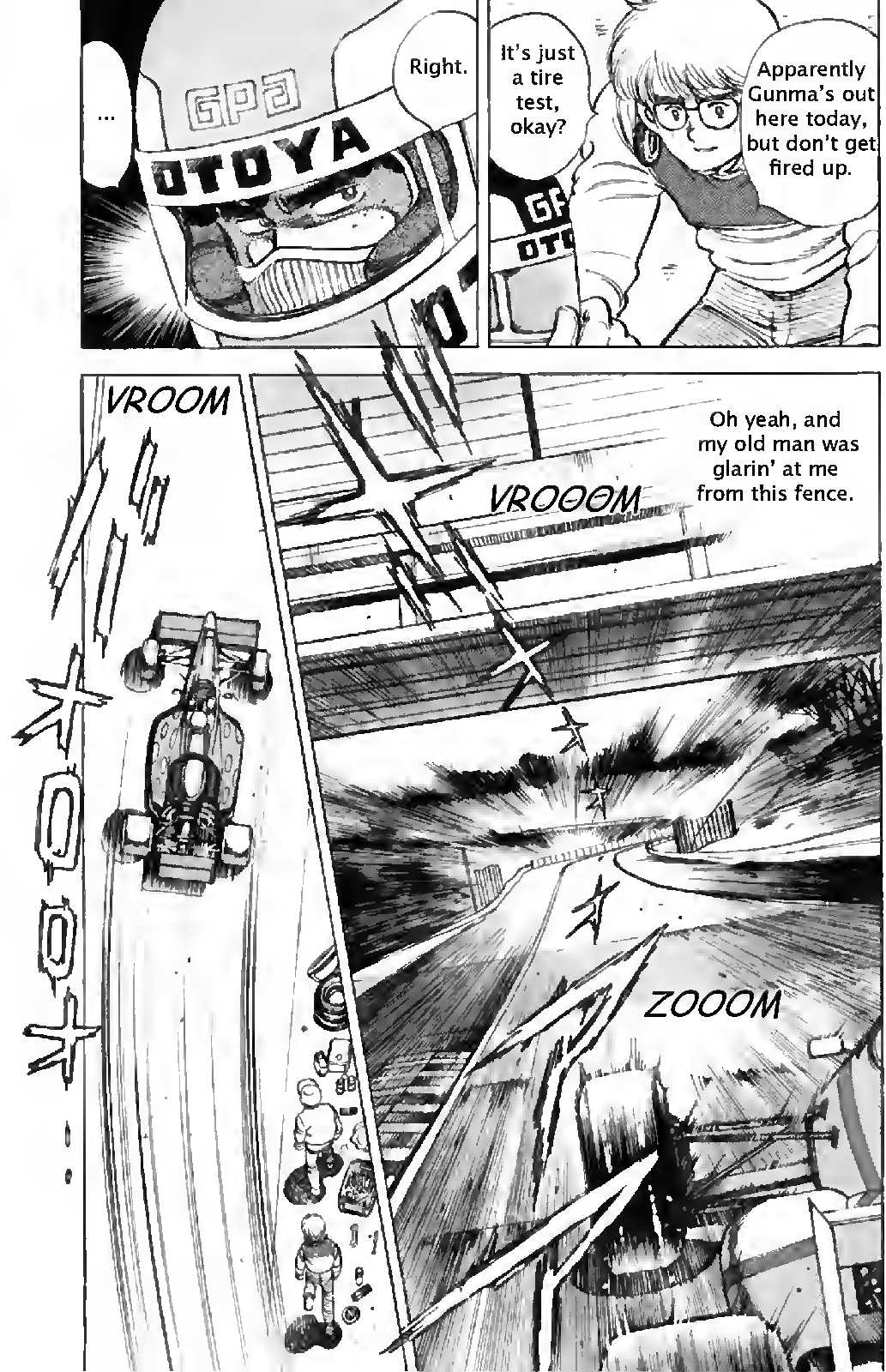

At full speed!
GUNMA


It's makin' me wanna race.
Or an engine shakedown?
AKAGI
LANCERC

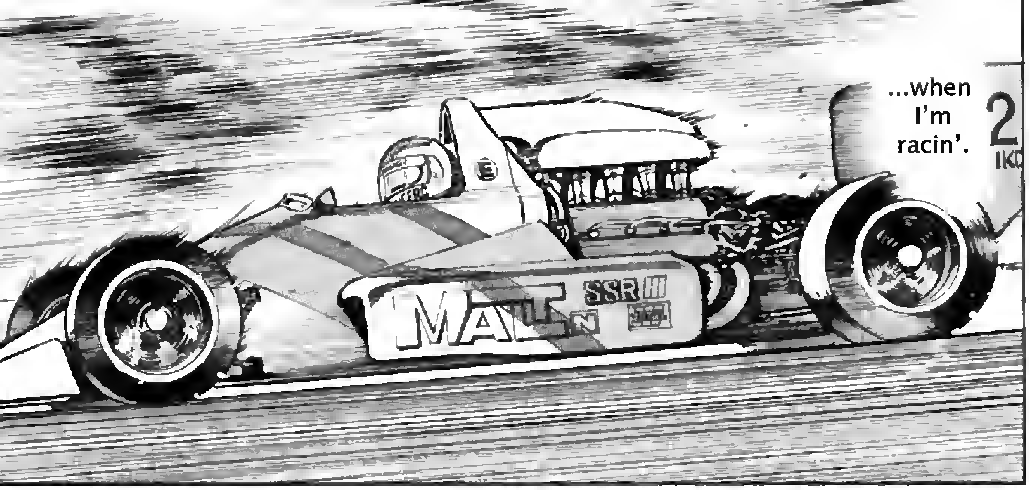
VEEEEEH
This is the last circuit I raced Hijiri at.
ZOOOOOM
And Ryuji died here too.

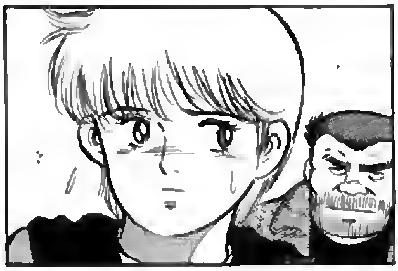

Otoya.
OTOYA
BEEPA!

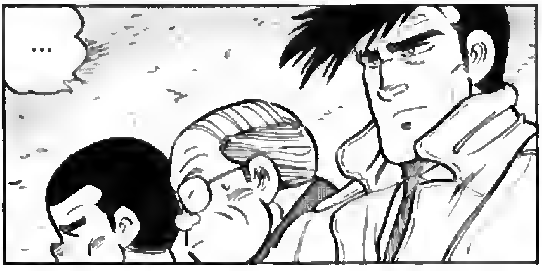
I guess he healed up then.
Are you seri-ous!?
Gunma Akagi's drivin' here? The one who was racing in Europe?

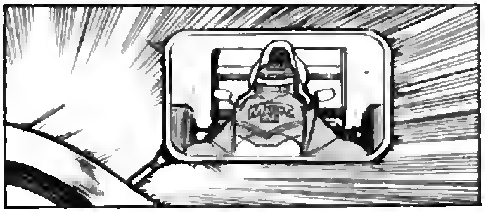

...
GP3
OTOYA
Right.
It's just a tire test, okay?
Apparently Gunma's out here today, but don't get fired up.
VROOM
VROOOM
Oh yeah, and my old man was glarin' at me from this fence.
ZOOOM

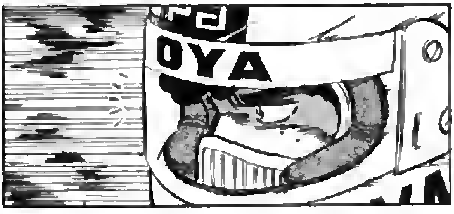
GPb
OTOYA
OTOYA
ZOOOM
ZOOM
GUNMA AKAGI
And I can only stop it...
Time just keeps rollin' on.


...when I'm racin'.
2
IKI
SSR III

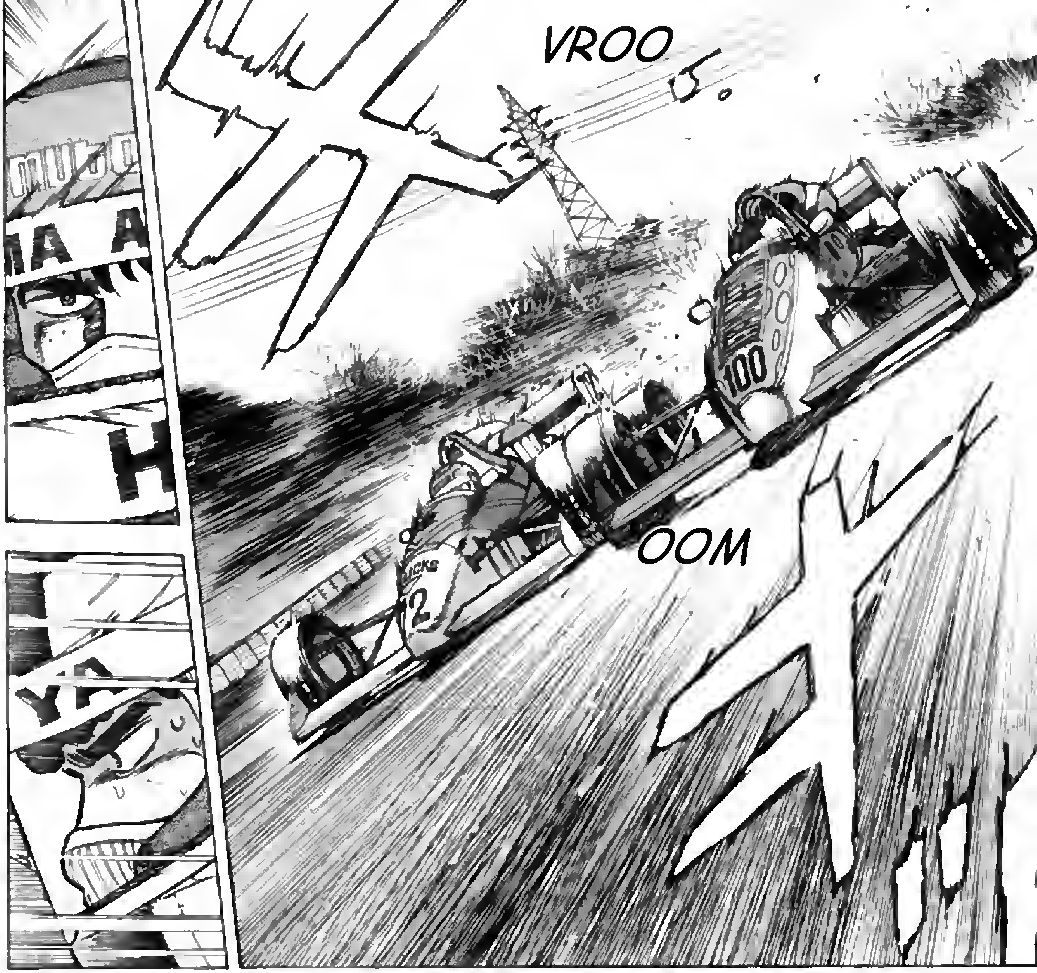


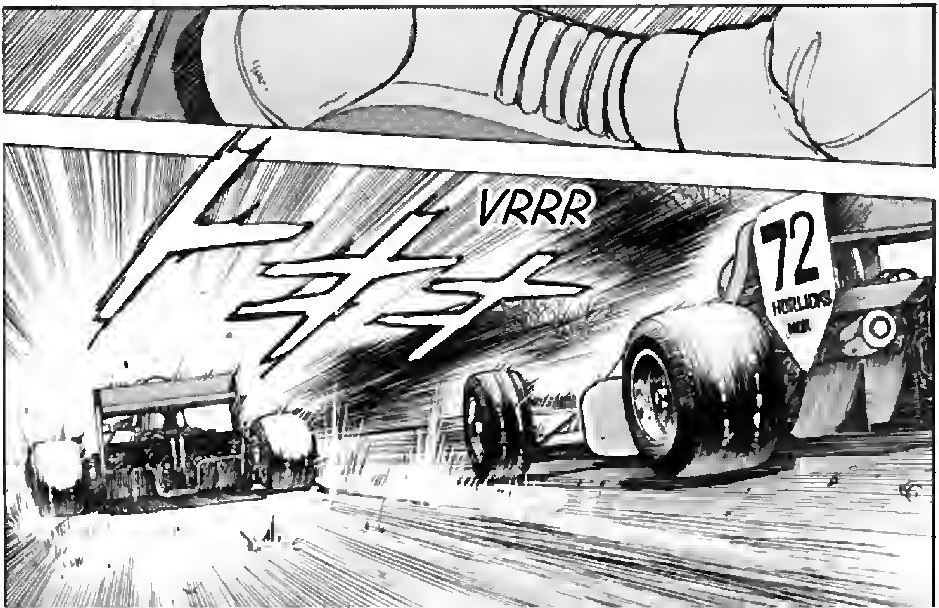

...

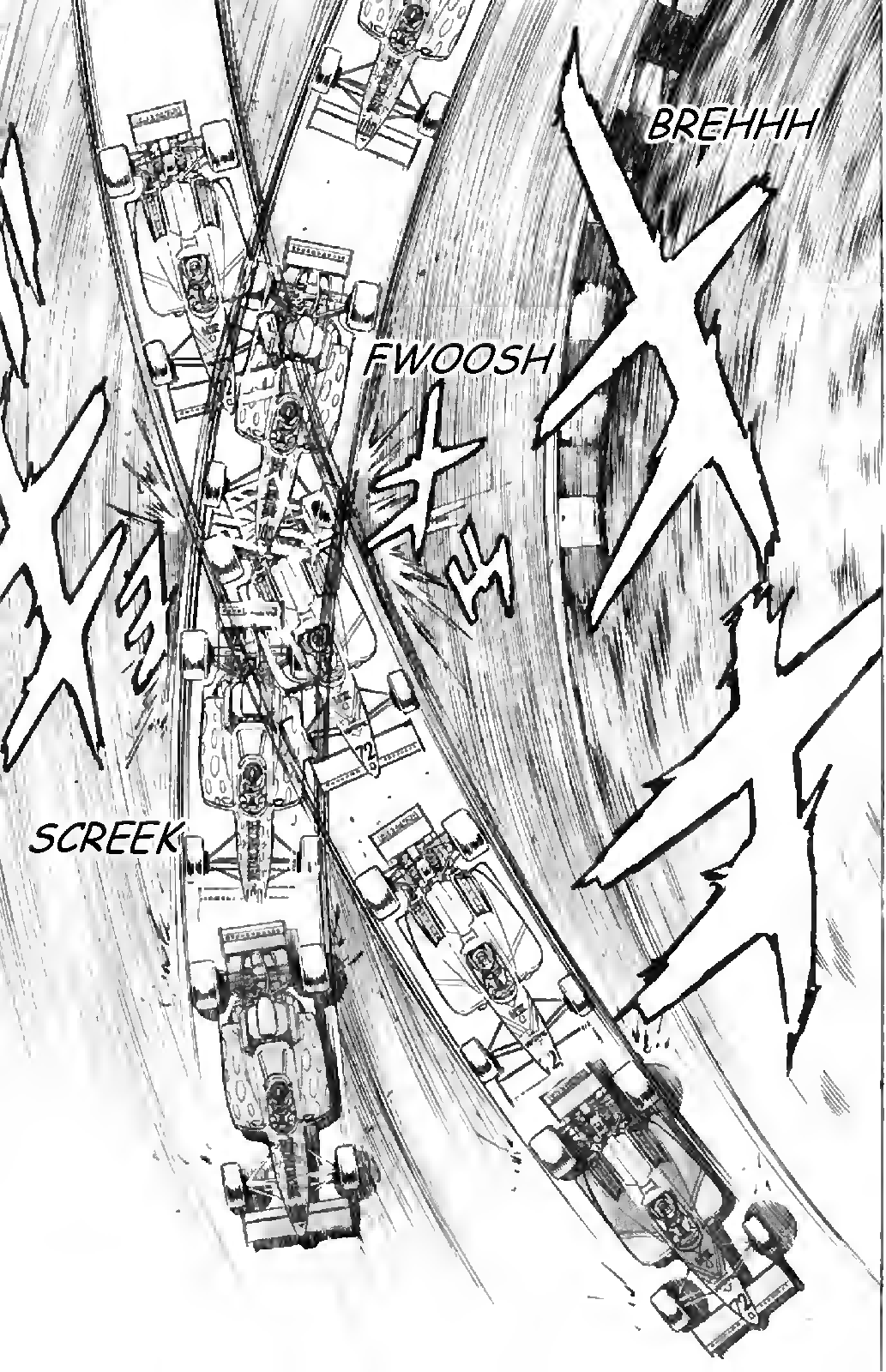


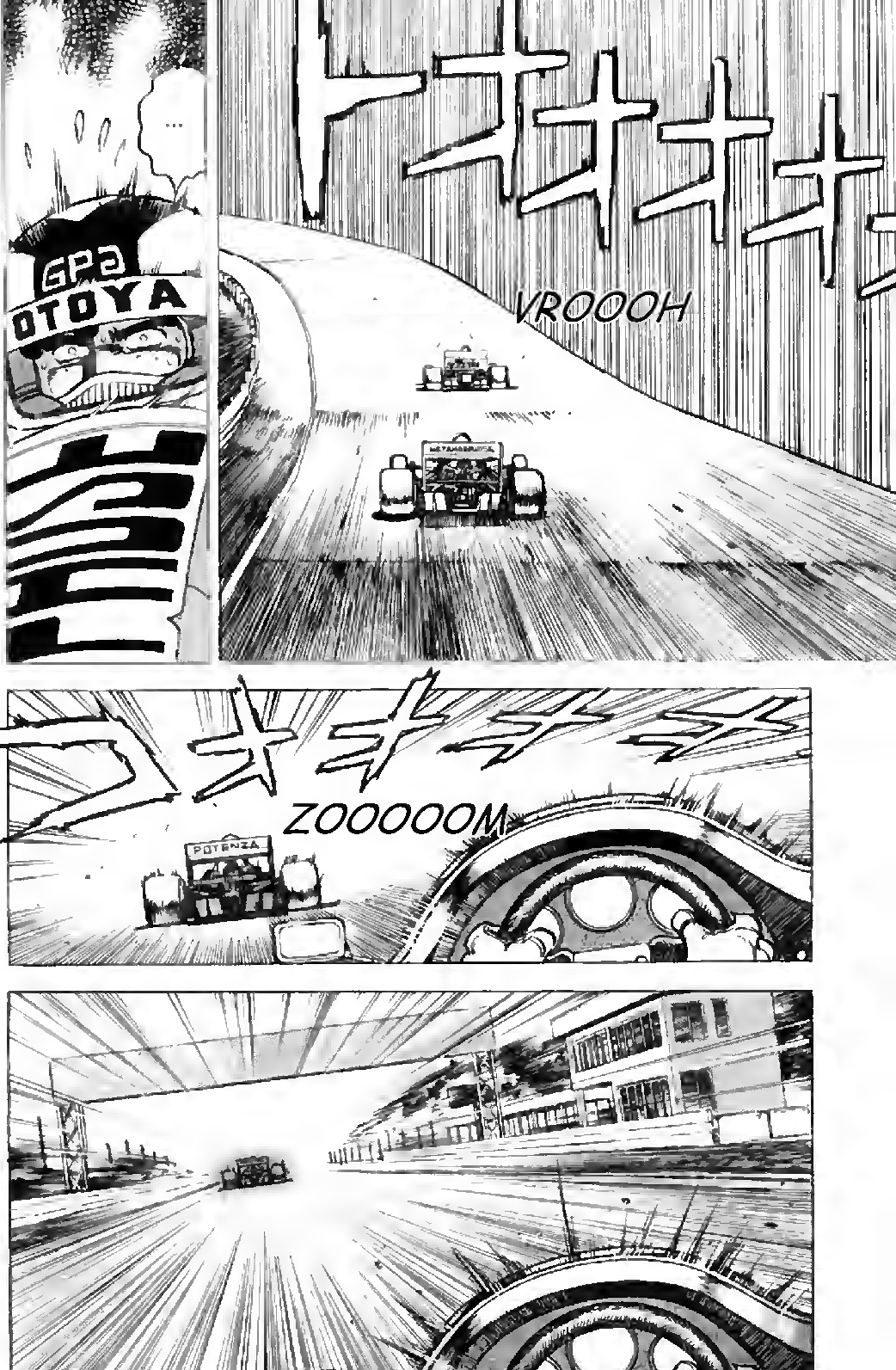

OYA

Gunma ...
ZOOOOOOM
POTENZA


VROO
OOM


VRRR
72

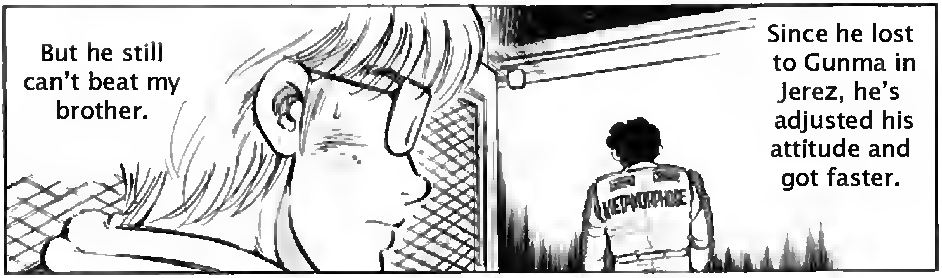

BREHHH
FWOOSH
SCREEK

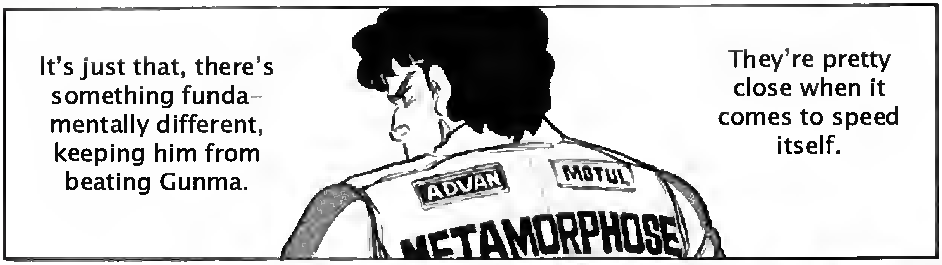

...
GP2
OTOYA
VROOOH
POTENZA
ZOOOOOM

SEIKO
CIRCUIT
SLAM

Raaaaaaahh!!!
Otoya!
Otoya! Cut it out!
BAM
Raaaaaaahh!!!
KRIP
KRIP
KRIP
O...
Oto-ya...

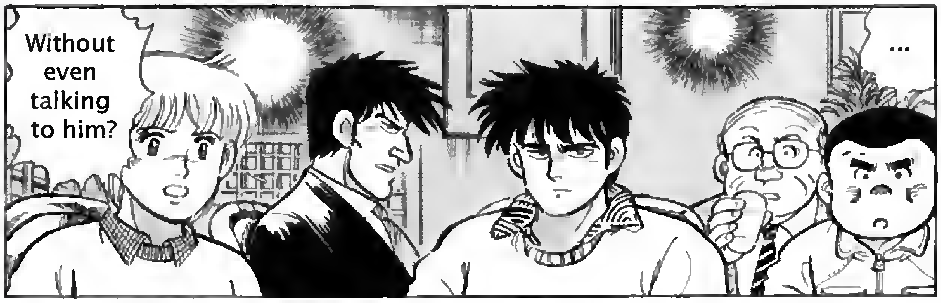
Otoya really has changed.
...
Otoya ...
ADVAN


But he still can't beat my brother.
Since he lost to Gunma in Jerez, he's adjusted his attitude and got faster.
METAMORPHOSE


It's just that, there's something fundamentally different, keeping him from beating Gunma.
They're pretty close when it comes to speed itself.
ADVAN
MOTUL
METAMORPHOSE

But what is it!?

Hans Racing wants to dissolve their contract with Gunma!?
What!?


Without even talking to him?
...

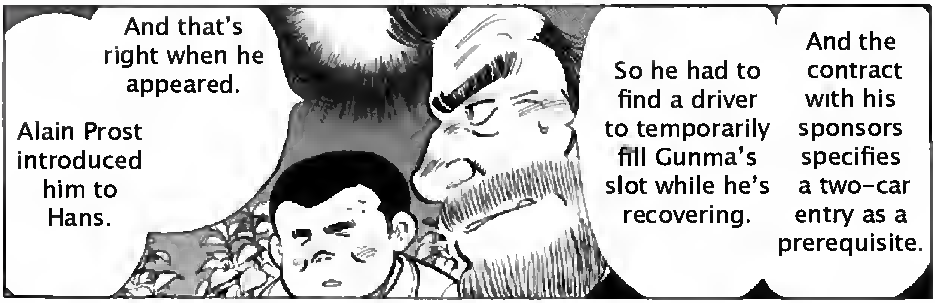
But there's also another reason.
He thinks Gunma needs the season off to recover, which is one reason he's doing this.
I know it sounds bad.

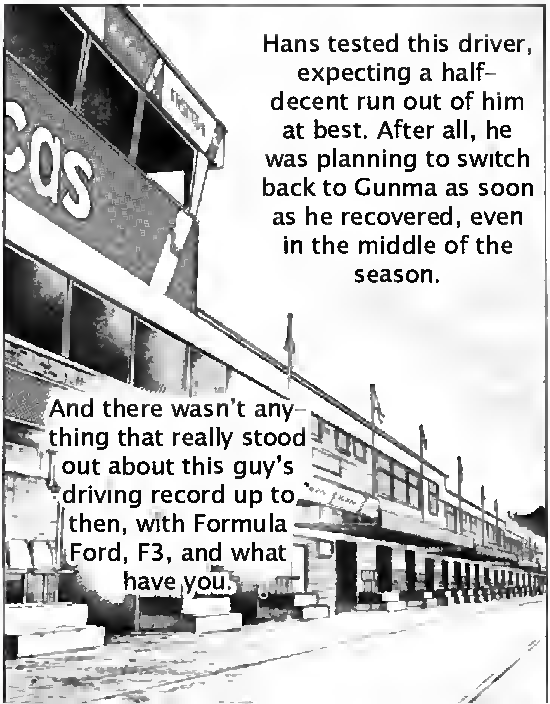
!!
Has finally found the ultimate driver!
Hans, or all of Europe rather...

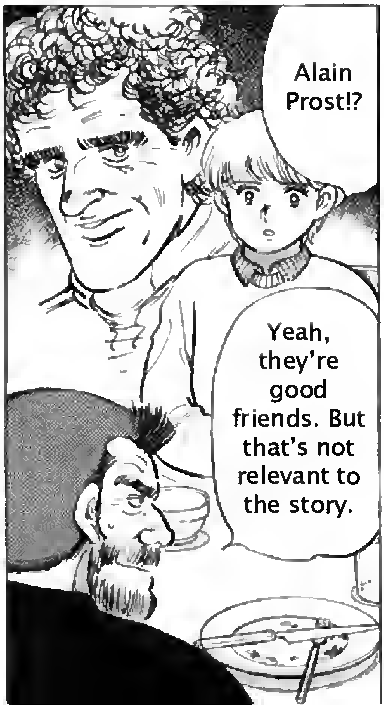
Chapter 10:
Son of God

...driver?
The ulti-
mate...
Almost
godlike!
That's
right!
It's not
a joke.
I'm seri-
ous!
Almost
godlike he
says.
Very funny.

At first glance, Hans naturally assumed it would take a full year for Gunma to recover.
No no, don't get the wrong idea. Hans isn't that cruel.
With-out even asking him?
So basically, Hans Racing is dumping Gunma on his butt and taking this "ultimate" driver in his place?


And that's right when he appeared.
Alain Prost introduced him to Hans.
So he had to find a driver to temporarily fill Gunma's slot while he's recovering.
And the contract with his sponsors specifies a two-car entry as a prerequisite.


Hans tested this driver, expecting a half-decent run out of him at best. After all, he was planning to switch back to Gunma as soon as he recovered, even in the middle of the season.
And there wasn't any-thing that really stood out about this guy's driving record up to then, with Formula Ford, F3, and what have you.


Alain Prost!?
Yeah, they're good friends. But that's not relevant to the story.

But Hans was floored when he saw this guy race!

It wasn't human, the way he drove. It's as if God himself was behind the wheel!

When Prost saw this, the guy who introduced him to us, his jaw hit the floor! He said he's known him for a while, but this is the first time he's ever really seen him race.

Only a handful of inner-circle observers were there to witness it.

And so was everyone else there, as if they had just witnessed something... supernatural!

But Hans was floored when he saw this guy race!

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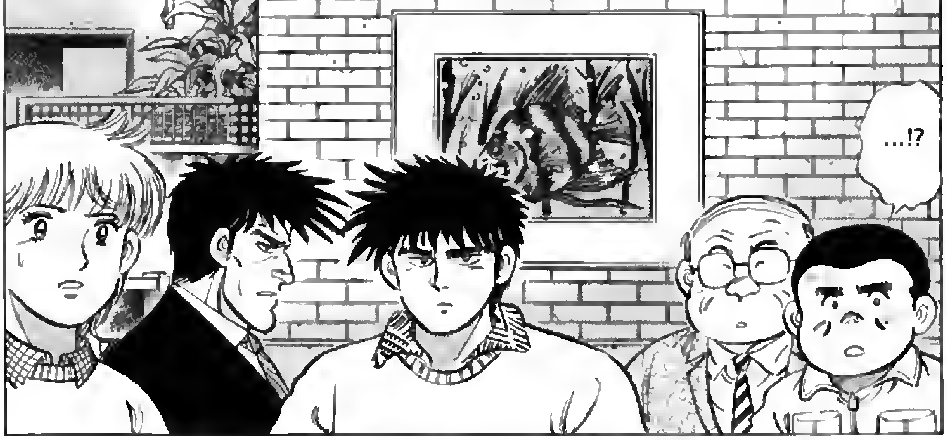
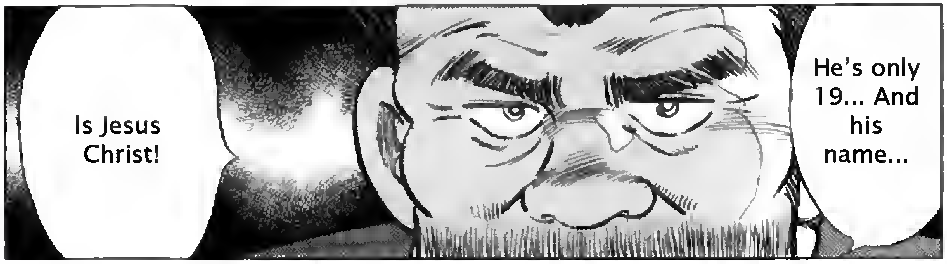

...!?

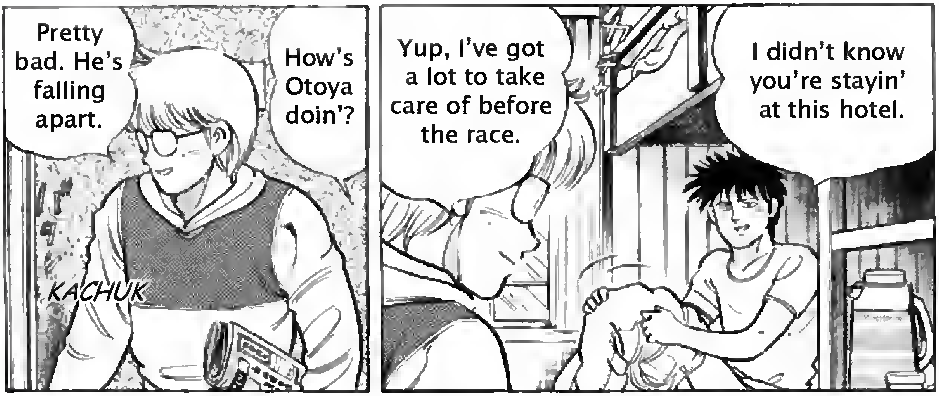

Is Jesus Christ!
He's only 19... And his name...

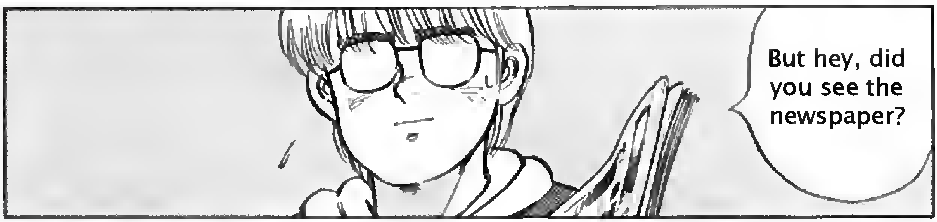
From the Bible!?
...Christ?
Jesus...
NOD

You're hilarious, dude! Did you really come all the way from England to tell jokes!?
Ha ha ha ha ha ha!
Heh...
That's why this all seems so one-sided, and I apologize for that.
The original plan was for Hans to come, but he's wrapped up in the season, so I came in his place.
...
So you switch from fairy tales to legal jargon!? Real nice! I'm goin' to bed!
SLAM
I've got all the paperwork ready, and plenty of compensation for breach of contract damages...
If he wants to fire me, have him say it to my face!
Send a message to Hans for me!
Orman!
Hold on, Gunma. I'm not finished.

Hold on!
Gun-ma!
Liars make me sick to my damn stomach!
Without any of these fairy tales!
Oh yeah!
Your idea of getting Gunma back on our team is looking better by the minute, Yasu!
Hm hm hm... So I guess this means...
Not gonna happen!
'Cause Gunma's gonna be on my team!
Why not?

Yuma?
It's me, bro. Can we talk?
Who is it?
KNOCK
KNOCK


Pretty bad. He's falling apart.
How's Otoya doin'?
KACHUK
Yup, I've got a lot to take care of before the race.
I didn't know you're stayin' at this hotel.


But hey, did you see the newspaper?

!?
Nah.

Family trouble!?

お家騒動!?

臨時株主総会

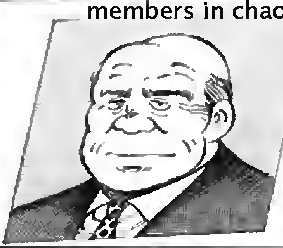
Shareholders Meeting

赤木総合商社
臨時株主総会で
新役員選出騒ぎ

Emergency shareholders meeting held for the Akagi Head Office, selection of new board members in chaos

大量の株式を
武器に
取締役の座に
ついた
田川辰次郎氏
(旧社長会会員)
の真意は!?

Tatsujiro Tagawa (former member of presidents group) uses significant ownership of shares as weapon to get a seat on the board. But what is he really after!?



衆議員選出馬
断念か!?

Will Akagi abandon his election bid?

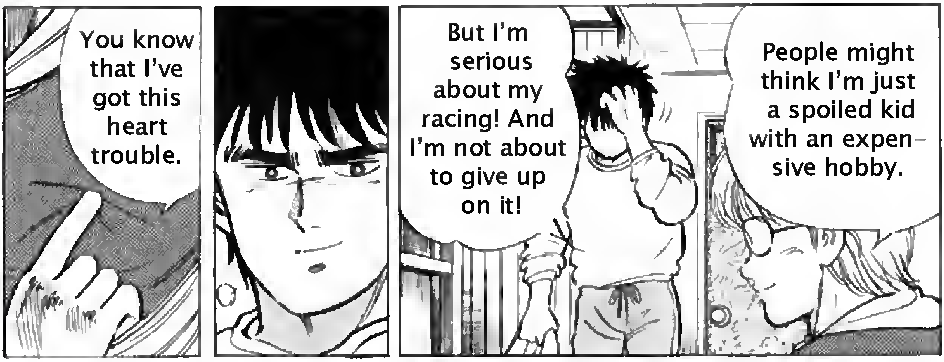
Soichiro Akagi refuses to comment!

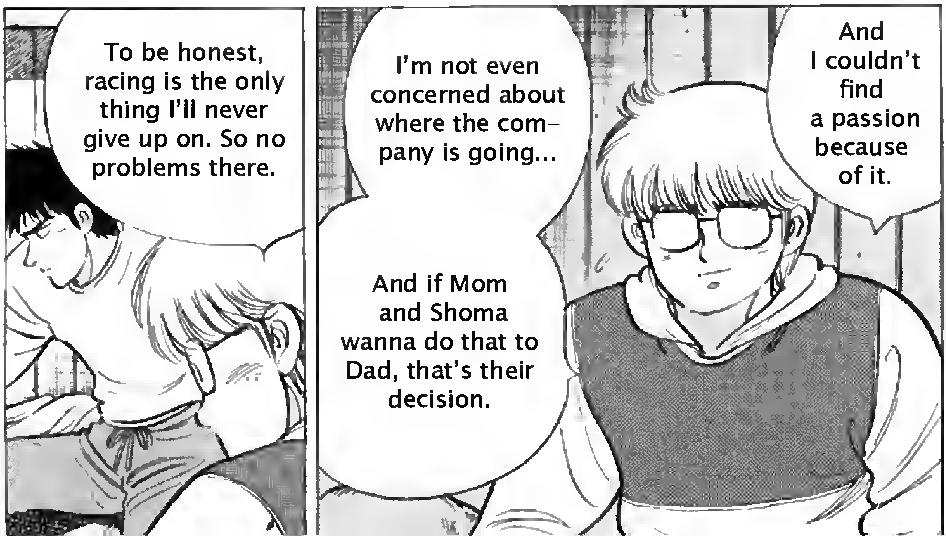
株券流出のなぞ?

How did Tagawa get those shares?

My mom stabbed Dad in the back.
Basi-cally...
I don't know much about the business side of things, but they seem pretty wound up about somethin'...
And Shoma was probably behind it too.
!?
By the way...
Ha ha ha!
No kidding? Juicy stuff...
They teamed up with Uncle Tatsu to try and kick Dad out of the company.
Now it all makes sense.
SPWISH
He looked kinda de-pressed.
FUSHA
FUSHA
I went to see my mama's grave at New Years, and I ran into the old man there.

I don't blame ya. Now that the company's gone all nuts, you can't focus on racing.
Gunma, to tell you the truth...
No, it's not that. It won't have any effect on the racing.
...this has kind of been bothering me.


You know that I've got this heart trouble.
But I'm serious about my racing! And I'm not about to give up on it!
People might think I'm just a spoiled kid with an expensive hobby.

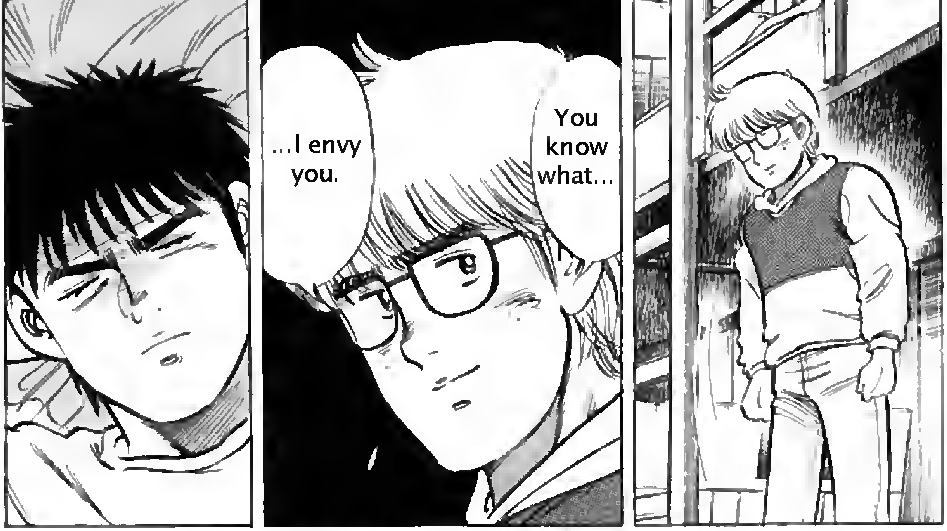

To be honest, racing is the only thing I'll never give up on. So no problems there.
I'm not even concerned about where the company is going...
And if Mom and Shoma wanna do that to Dad, that's their decision.
And I couldn't find a passion because of it.

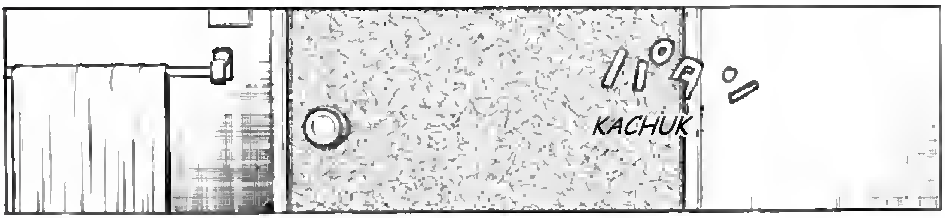
It's just that...
Dad's just following his conscience with all that, so it's fine with me.
Is Dad still gonna run for a seat in the House...? What'll become of the company...?
...who can encourage him.
I'm not the one...
!?
...we can't raise his spirits.
Me and Shoma...

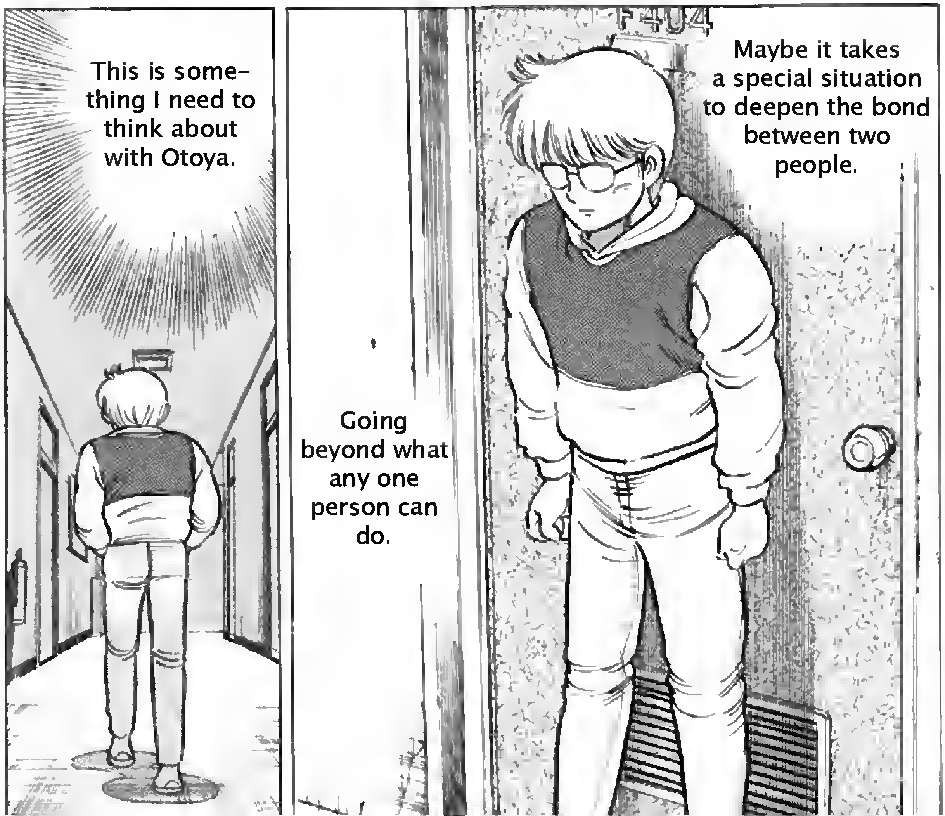
I don't like this.
...
I mean, his right-hand man for decades just vanished, and it's just like you said...
...he's pretty de-pressed.
To be honest, Dad's seriously in a bind right now.

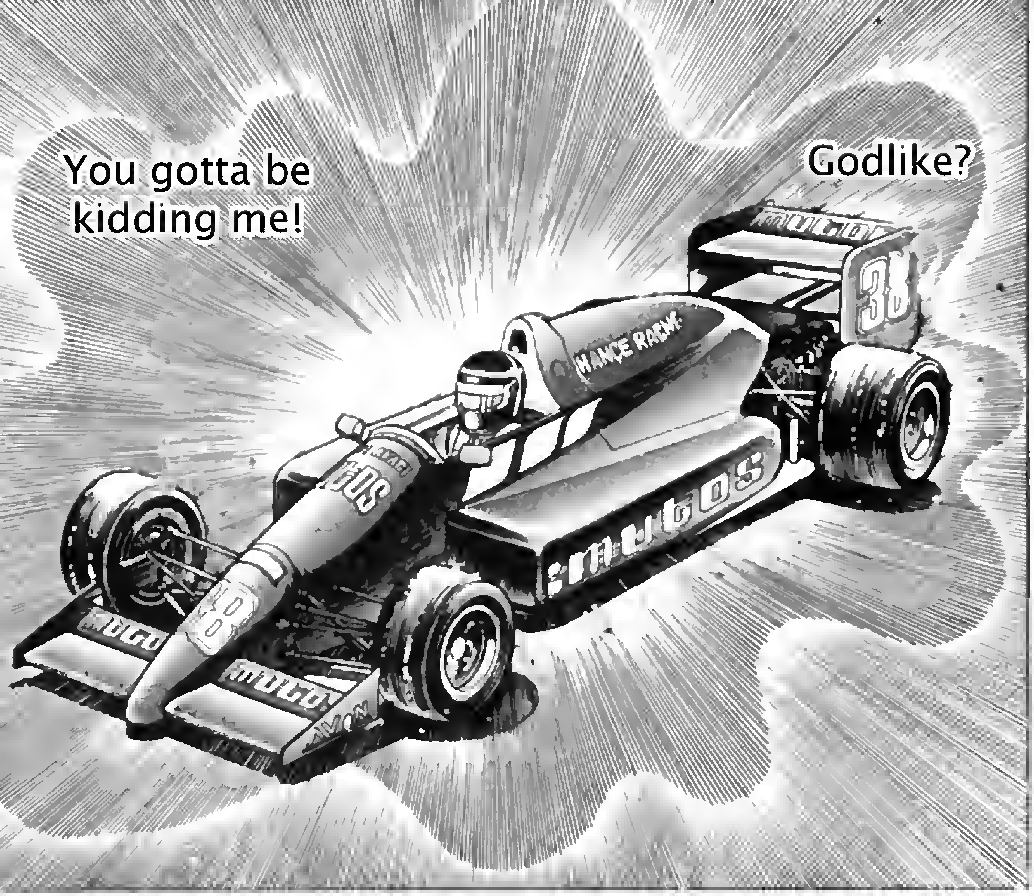
That's all we ever had between us.
A whole lotta hate.
I hate him, and he hates me.
Don't waste your time with that!
As if you're tryin' to get me on good terms with my old man or somethin'.

...


...I envy you.
You know what...

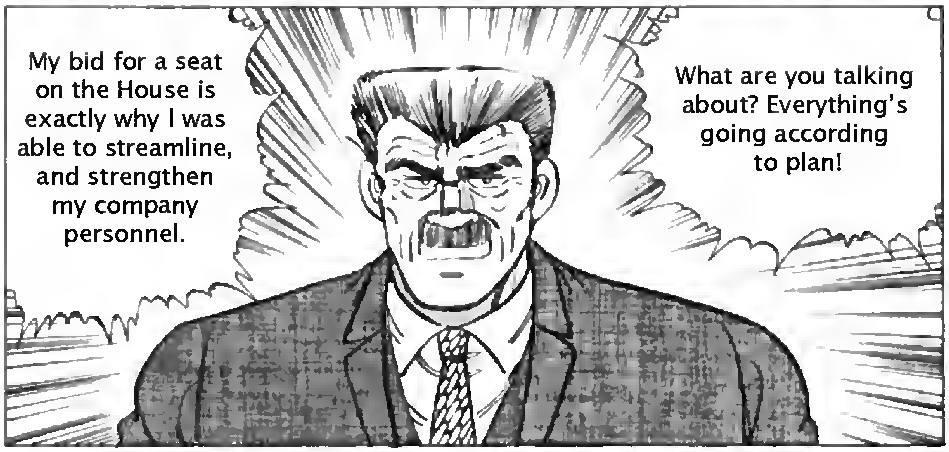

KACHUK

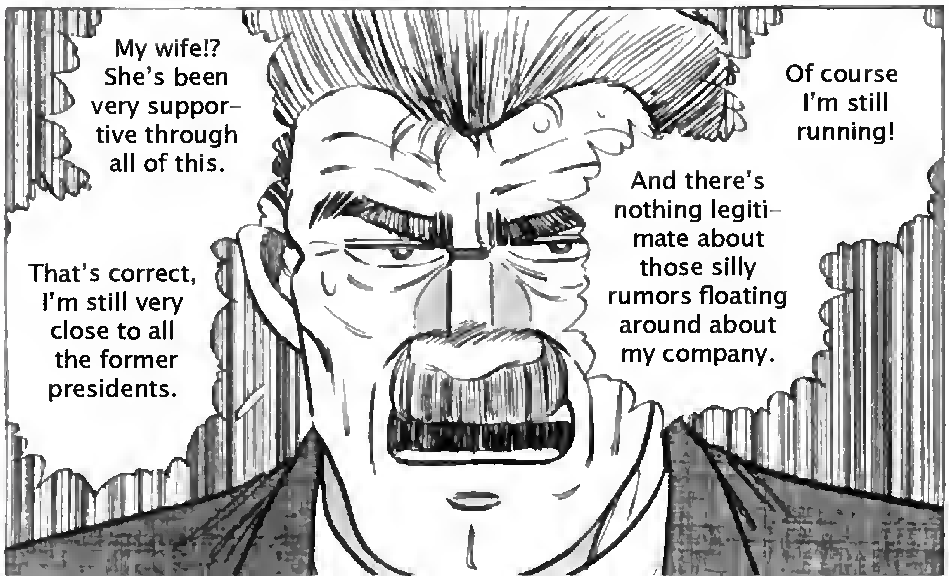

This is something I need to think about with Otoya.
Going beyond what any one person can do.
Maybe it takes a special situation to deepen the bond between two people.


You gotta be kidding me!
Godlike?
33
HANDE RACING
BRABHAM
BMW

This is gettin' under my skin!

With all this chaos before the election, are you having second thoughts about running!?
It seems a lot has changed since the start of the new year.
Does it have anything to do with the rumored relocation plan!?


My bid for a seat on the House is exactly why I was able to streamline, and strengthen my company personnel.
What are you talking about? Everything's going according to plan!


My wife!? She's been very suppor- tive through all of this.
Of course I'm still running!
And there's nothing legiti- mate about those silly rumors floating around about my company.
That's correct, I'm still very close to all the former presidents.

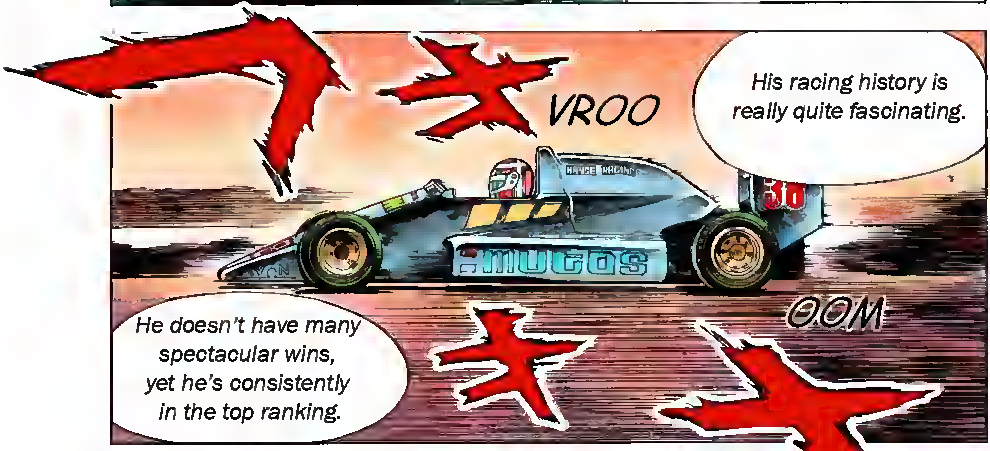
VOL.18

Chapter 11:
The Promise
mugos
mugos
mugos
mugos
mugos
3

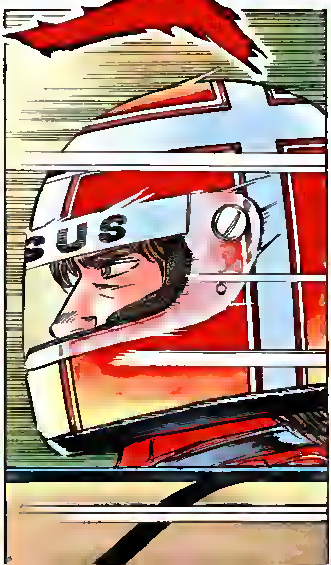
Chapter 11: The Promise

VROOOOOH
MUGEN
MUGEN
MUGEN
shell
30
SHOOM

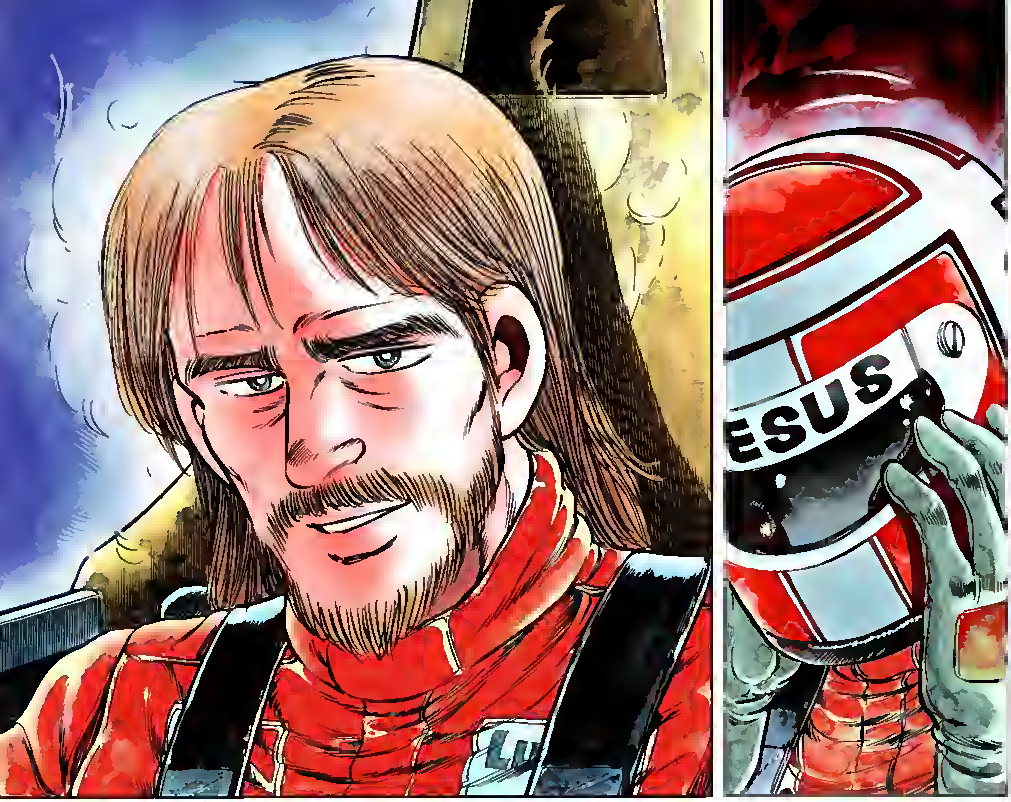
Lucas
Lucas
Lucas
Lucas
Donington Park Circuit


VROO
His racing history is really quite fascinating.
He doesn't have many spectacular wins, yet he's consistently in the top ranking.
OOM

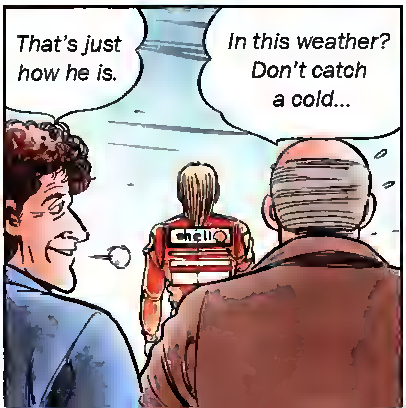
And something of particular interest, Jesus has never fallen out of a race.
Or even crashed for that matter!
Well, just look at him.

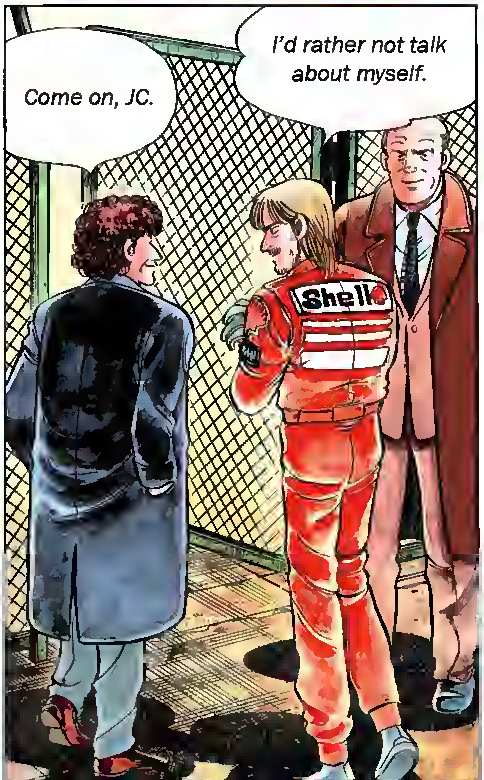

SUS

SHOOOM
How he glides across the track, it's quite impressive really. I've never seen anything like it!
Tell me everything you know about this guy, Alain.
VRRR
OOM
How about we discuss this over some coffee, with him at the table too?

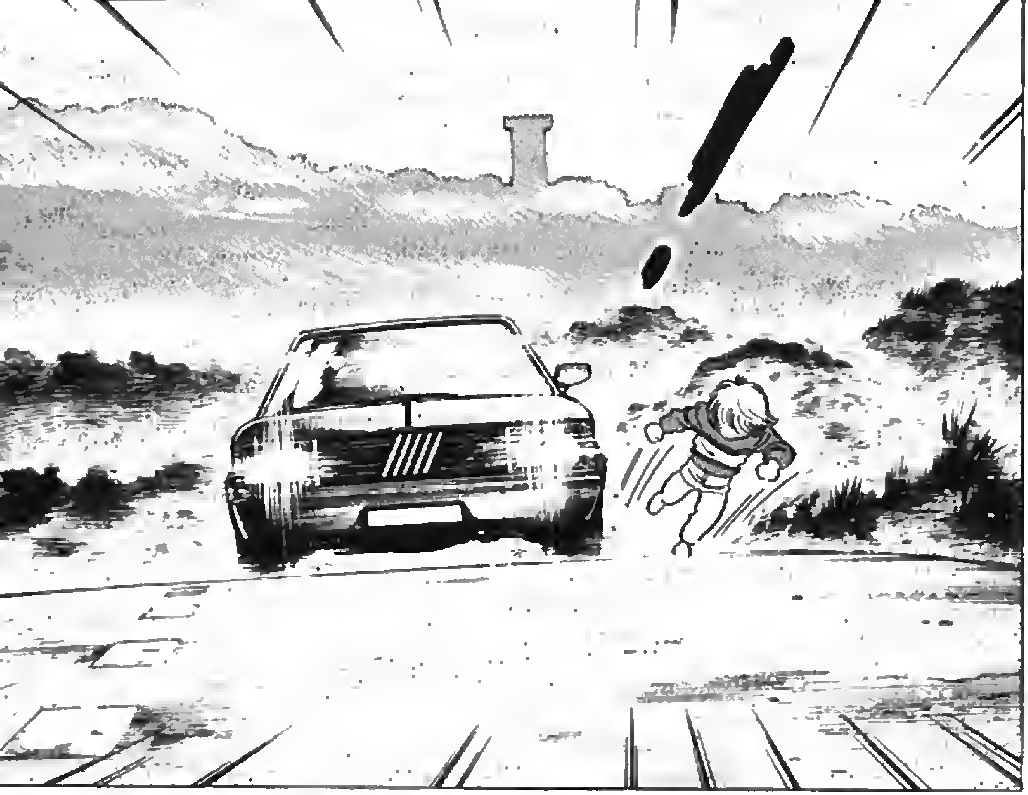

ESUS

Go ahead and tell him whatever you want. I'm going for a stroll.


That's just how he is.
In this weather? Don't catch a cold...
Shell


Come on, JC.
I'd rather not talk about myself.
Shell

He was born on the Isle of Man in 1971.
Just your average boy, raised on an average farm.
But he was involved in an accident when he was 12.
An accident!?
NGK
BOSS
IBM



Wasn't really anything to speak of...
The car just barely grazed JC's legs.
Just a minor collision.
It was nothing, really. Although it may have been different if the police were nearby.

Really, I'm fine!
Wait, I'll take you into hospital.

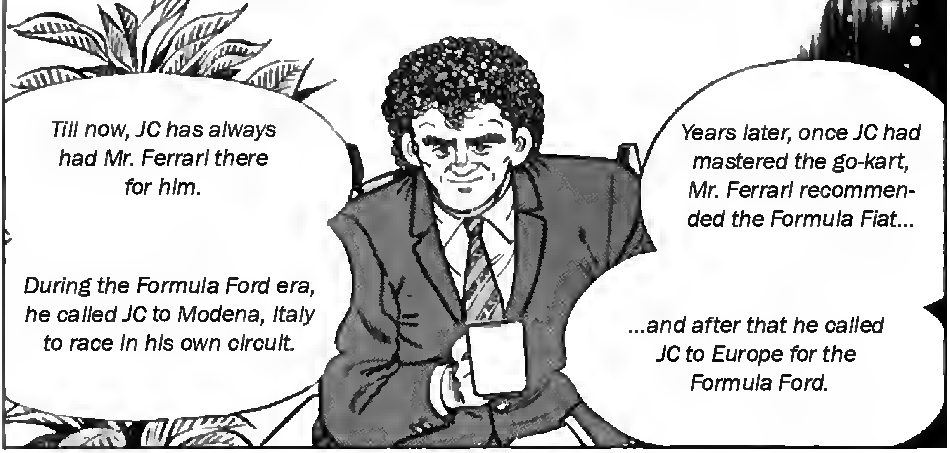
Sure, it's nothing.
You alright, lad?

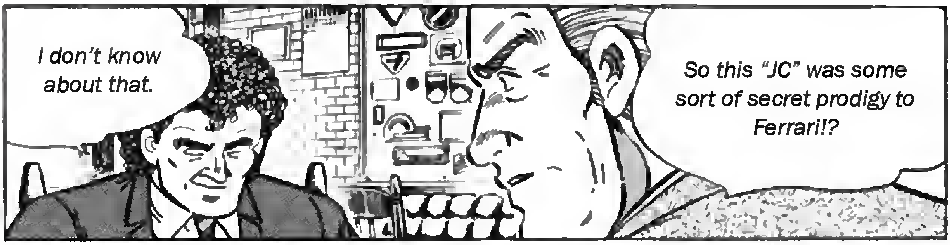
KACHIK
Are you a tourist?
This won't do. If you'd rather avoid hospital, I'll take you home instead.
We just didn't see you in this thick fog.
My apologies, young man. Are you injured?
There's no hope at this point, I think I'm done for...!
Owww! I'm hurt really bad! I... might not make it...
.....
Really!?
I didn't realize you were hurt so badly. Let me know if there's anything I can do to help!
.....

Would you do anything?
Sure, anything within my power. But first, you're off to hospital.
I was wondering if I could ask you a favor though, sir.
No hospital for me. I'm feeling much better now.
Do you know who I am, son?
Mr. Enzo Ferrari!
Uh-huh!

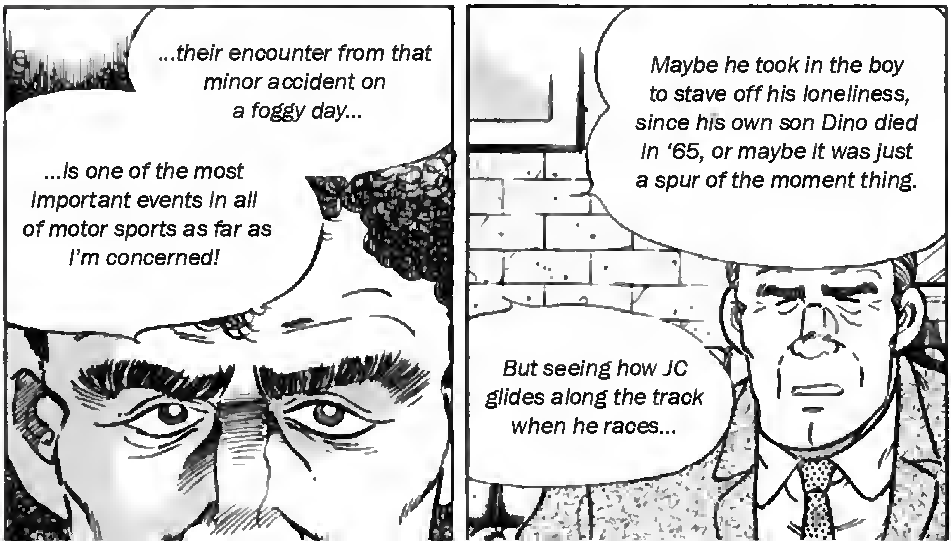
And JC got him to make a promise, right there on the spot.
Let me drive your cars, sir!
Enzo Ferrari!?
And...
Ferrari accepted?
Very well, son. But on one condition.
I'll give you a go-kart as a gift, to hone your driving skills.
Once you've mastered that, you can move up to something better, and we'll see how high you can climb.
Then, once I've recognized you as someone worthy of driving my cars, I'll make good on my promise!

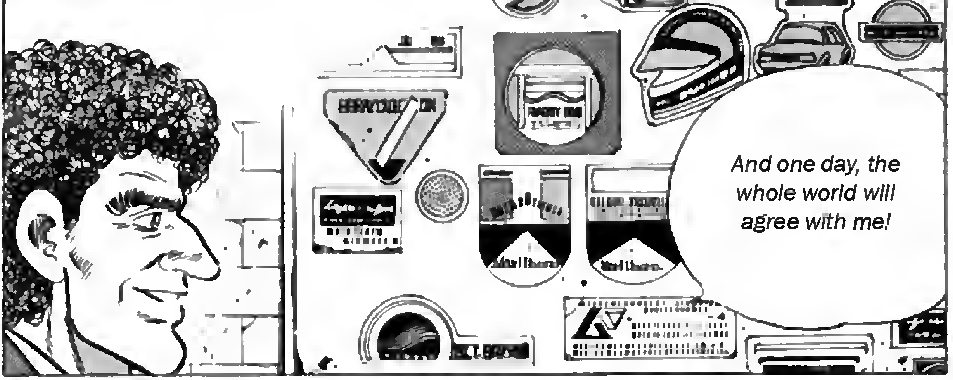
Enzo Ferrari was a great man in the world of racing, becoming a driver himself during the early stages of Grand Prix development, and later introduced numerous exceptional cars into circuit racing.
Other than his talent with cars, Ferrari also had a knack for discovering talented drivers, including Alberto Ascari, Juan Manuel Fangio, Mike Hawthorn, Phil Hill, John Surtees, Niki Lauda, and Jody Scheckter among others.
And on one exceptionally foggy day, he had that fated encounter with JC.
Of course, he wasn't able to predict the future of a 12-year-old boy on that day, but he gave JC a go-kart to make up for the accident, and listened intently, to that young boy with big dreams.


Till now, JC has always had Mr. Ferrari there for him.
During the Formula Ford era, he called JC to Modena, Italy to race in his own circuit.
Years later, once JC had mastered the go-kart, Mr. Ferrari recommended the Formula Fiat...
...and after that he called JC to Europe for the Formula Ford.


I don't know about that.
So this "JC" was some sort of secret prodigy to Ferrari!?

He did show Mansell and me JC's driving skills in private sessions.
Mr. Ferrari passed away in '88, and he never told me what he actually though of JC.


...their encounter from that minor accident on a foggy day...
...Is one of the most important events in all of motor sports as far as I'm concerned!
Maybe he took in the boy to stave off his loneliness, since his own son Dino died in '65, or maybe it was just a spur of the moment thing.
But seeing how JC glides along the track when he races...


And one day, the whole world will agree with me!

GULP

One of these days, Mansell or I will have to give up our spot on Ferrari to him.

I heard your Japanese driver won't be coming back for a while due to injury.
It goes without saying, that I'd love to take him in!
But until then, I'd like you to take him in.

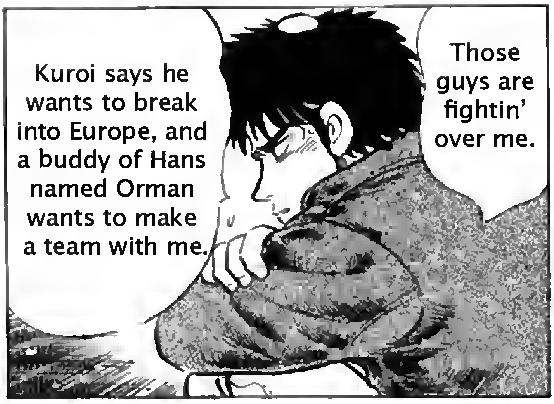
SHIK
SHIK
SHIK
...

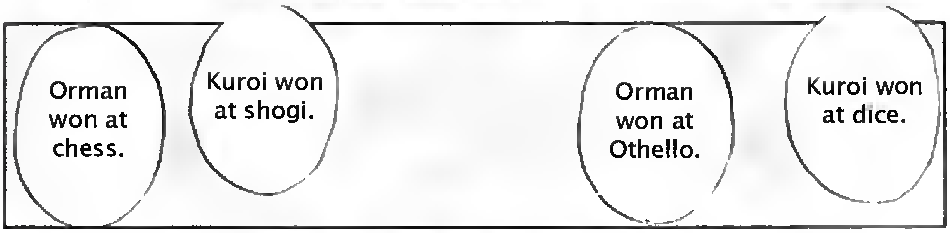
PFF
FOOOH
PUFF
Marlboro
ell oils

Mind your own business!
Shut up and find a wife or somethin', dude.
KREHH
And tell me what's going on.
Did you really get fired by Hans Racing?
And his name's Jesus Christ!
...they said some guy who drives like God came outta nowhere.
Well...
Huh ...
I don't know the details, but appa-rently there's some truth to it.
Ha ha! Funny, ain't it? Even a gifted driver like me can't beat God.
Jesus Christ!?
...
All jokes aside...
CRASH
Why don't you work here with me, then? I could always use an extra hand!

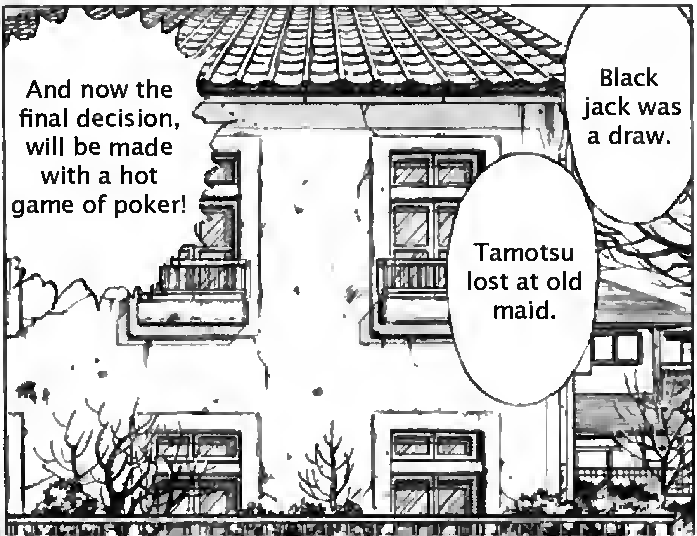
Looks to me like you're all healed up. Figured out your next team?
...what're you planning to do from here on out?

Makes me happy to have somebody fightin' over me like that.
They stayed up all night arguing about it.
?

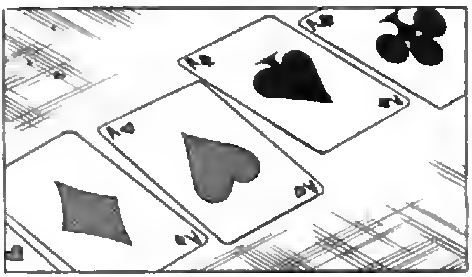

Kuroi says he wants to break into Europe, and a buddy of Hans named Orman wants to make a team with me.
Those guys are fightin' over me.

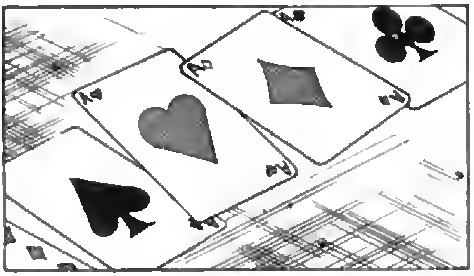

Orman won at chess.
Kuroi won at shogi.
Orman won at Othello.
Kuroi won at dice.

Let the best man win!
Ready, and...


And now the final decision, will be made with a hot game of poker!
Black jack was a draw.
Tamotsu lost at old maid.

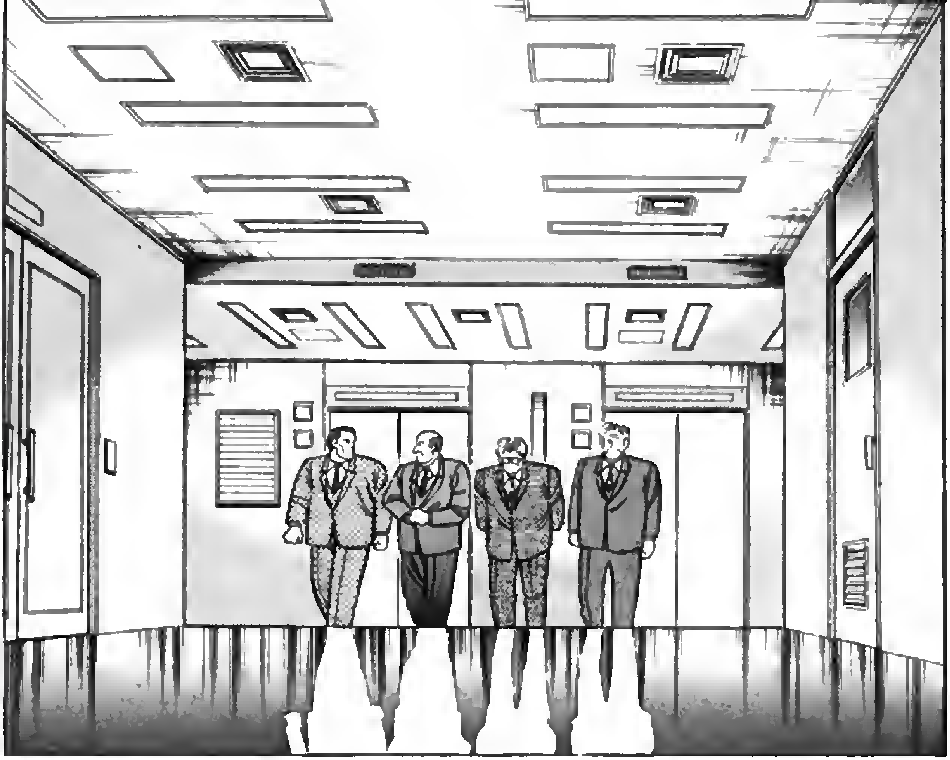
Four aces!
I win!
THUNK
THUNK

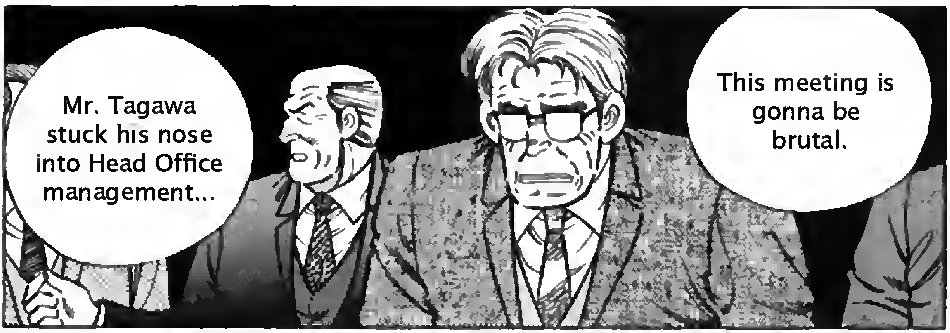




ZZZZZ
ZZZ
How many decks did you put in here, Granny?
Well, well... You'll just have to join forces as one team!

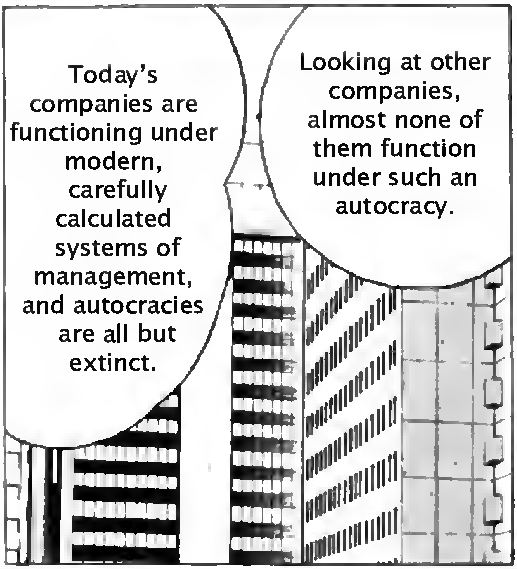
Chapter 12: The Board Meeting

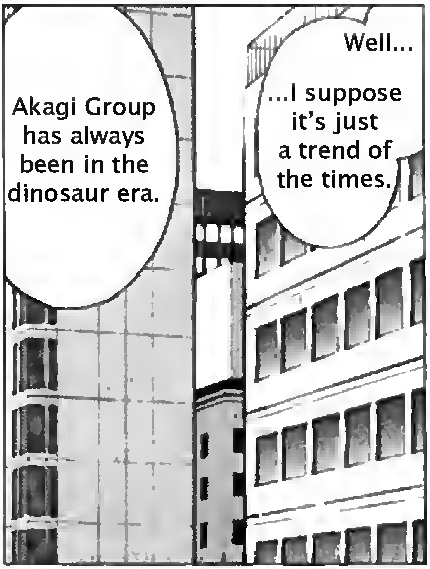



Mr. Tagawa stuck his nose into Head Office management...
This meeting is gonna be brutal.

Up to now, Akagi Group has been managed as a virtual autocracy, but there's a crack in it now.

...is going to shake up the very foundation of our Group. We need to discuss the measures to...
Because of that crack, the symbiotic relationship we're about to have among our affiliates, due to the inevitable cross-holdings format...

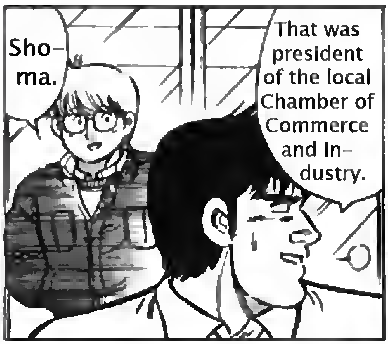

Today's companies are functioning under modern, carefully calculated systems of management, and autocracies are all but extinct.
Looking at other companies, almost none of them function under such an autocracy.

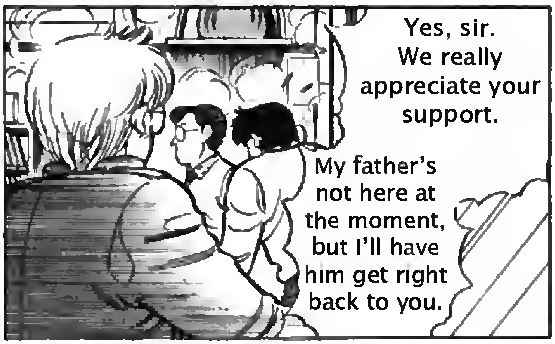

Akagi Group has always been in the dinosaur era.
Well...
...I suppose it's just a trend of the times.

I see.
Putting all that aside, President Akagi has to take responsibility for this mess, if nothing else.

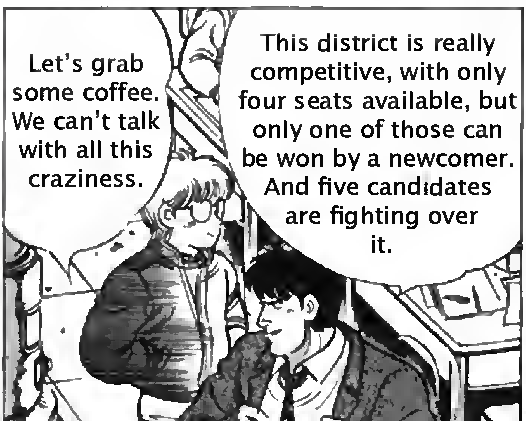
...in front of President Akagi?
But can you muster up that sort of courage...

For an abundant nation and planet
Grand-Vision-Politics
RINNNNG
豊かな国土と地球
大いなるビジョンの
Shoma, phone call for you sir.
We've got a lot of work to do here. Posters, flyers, addressers, you name it.
I also want to beef up our election tours...
Bring in more campaign people. We didn't plan a big enough group.


Sho-ma.
That was president of the local Chamber of Commerce and In-dustry.


Yes, sir. We really appreciate your support.
My father's not here at the moment, but I'll have him get right back to you.

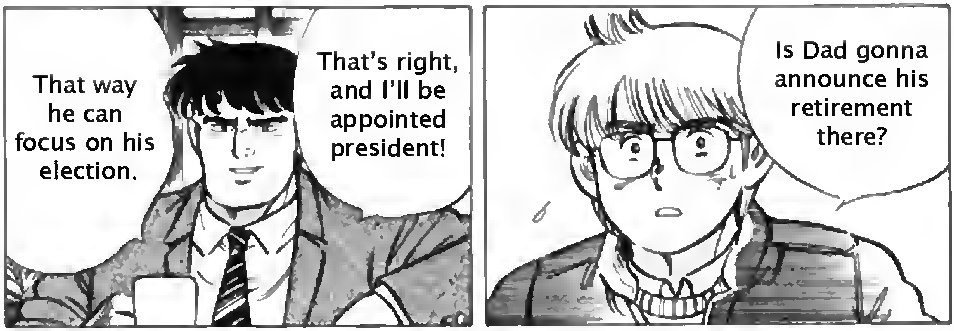
Oh, hey Yuma.


Let's grab some coffee. We can't talk with all this craziness.
This district is really competitive, with only four seats available, but only one of those can be won by a newcomer. And five candidates are fighting over it.

勝
Sure looks busy.
Yeah, we got our hands full.

必勝
Thanks. Appre-ciate it.
I'll take care of this, sir.
Sorry, but I was just about to grab a bite to eat. Haven't had a thing since last night.
Excuse me, I'm from the Weekly Potato...
She looks familiar somehow...
This must be tough for people at the Head Office, too.
Shoot, he's probably still sleeping! He was out late at some campaign meeting.
Whether it's good or bad, Dad's all over the headlines now.
I wish these reporters would at least make appointments by phone, but we don't have that flexibility as newcomers.
Where is Dad, anyway?
Yeah, they've been in a board meeting since this afternoon.

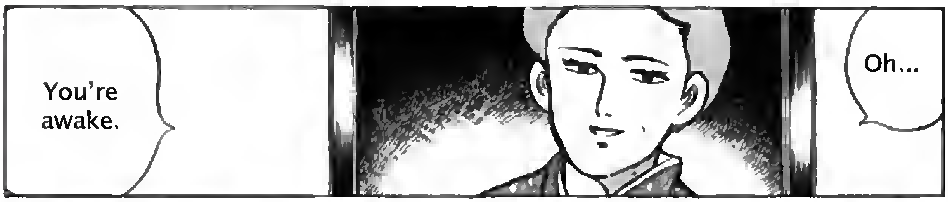
Actually, Uncle Tatsu was the one who set it up.
That's why they're holding a board meeting at such a busy time.
He's finally made up his mind, to leave the company in my hands.
He told me a lot about his vision and all that, but with Mom twisting his arm a bit, we eventually got him to do the right thing.
I stayed up all night talking to Dad the other day.

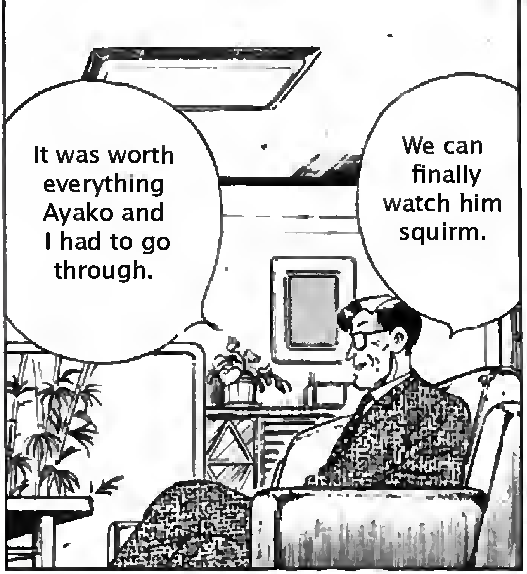

That way he can focus on his election.
That's right, and I'll be appointed president!
Is Dad gonna announce his retirement there?

But it's better this way, for our family, and for the company.
Ever since Kasai went missing, he can hardly function.
Still, Dad's lost all his energy.

HA-HA-HA
...

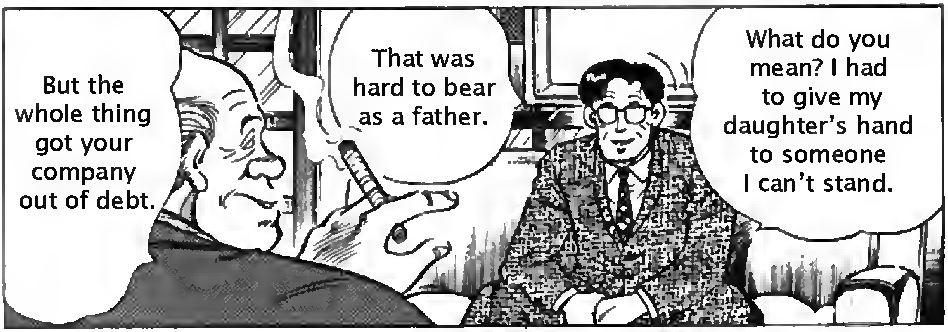
Honey?


You're awake.
Oh...


It was worth everything Ayako and I had to go through.
We can finally watch him squirm.

Everything went perfectly.
Tagawa Residence

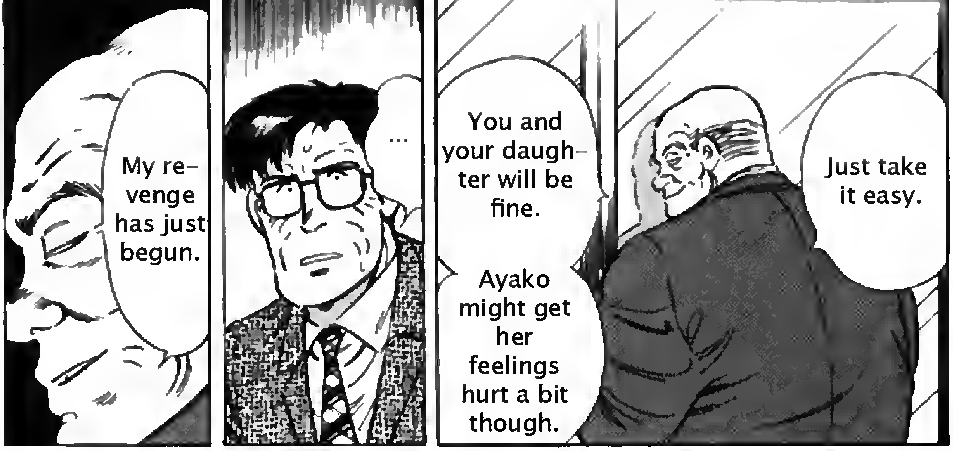
What did you have to go through?

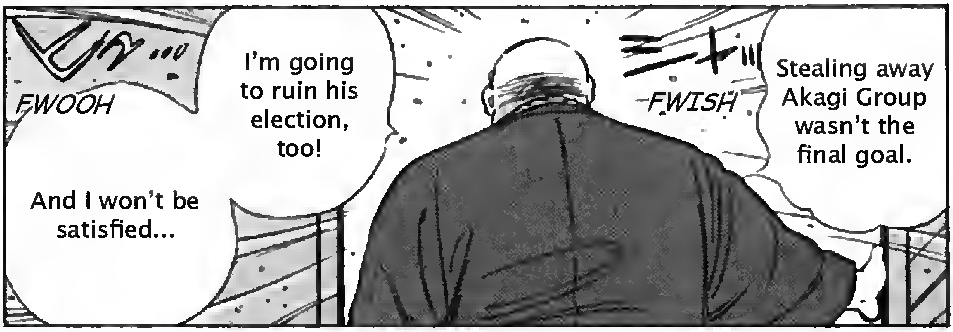

But the whole thing got your company out of debt.
That was hard to bear as a father.
What do you mean? I had to give my daughter's hand to someone I can't stand.

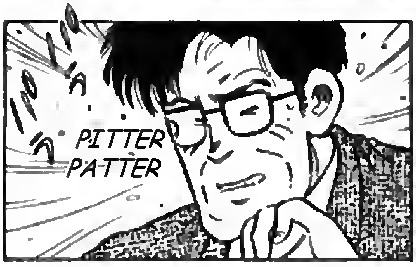
No one said Shoma's going to be president.
SQUISH

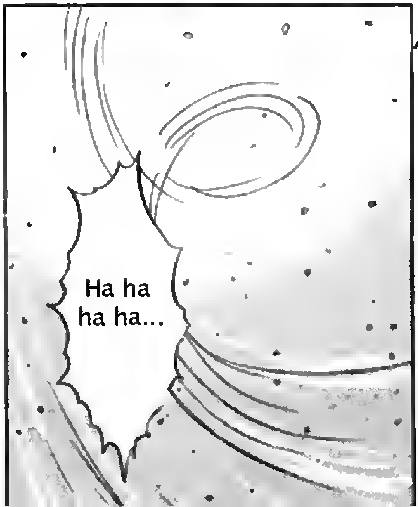
Anyway, once Shoma is appointed president, my daughter and I will be well off.
I can't deny that, but still...

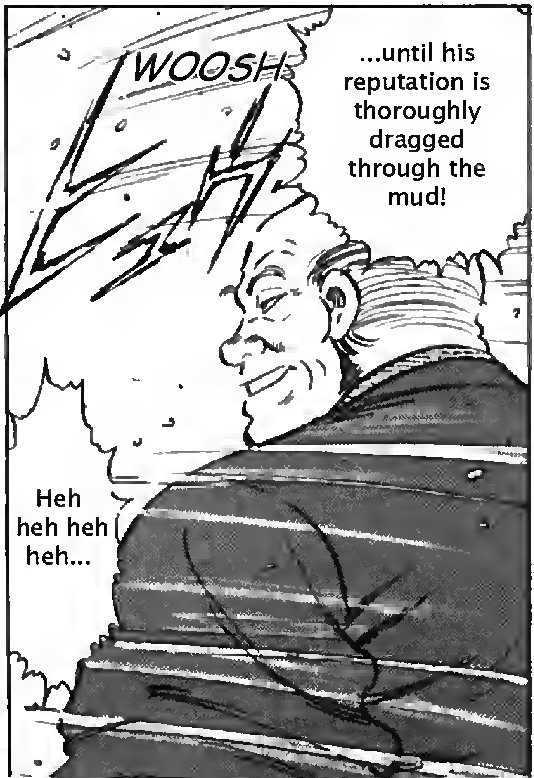
Sure, sure...
B-But... As the eldest Akagi son, he has to be appointed president, or the board members would go nuts!
But if you don't turn over the presidency to Shoma, the board members, and even the general public, will be up in arms!
Mr. Tagawa, everything's gone according to your plan from the very beginning. You've got the entirety of Akagi Group, including the Head Office, in your hands now. So there's nothing to object to.
But what if the general public...
You persuaded everyone on the board that Shoma's the man.
KEH HEH HEH
!?
...isn't fit to be president of the Head Office?
...were to find out that Shoma...

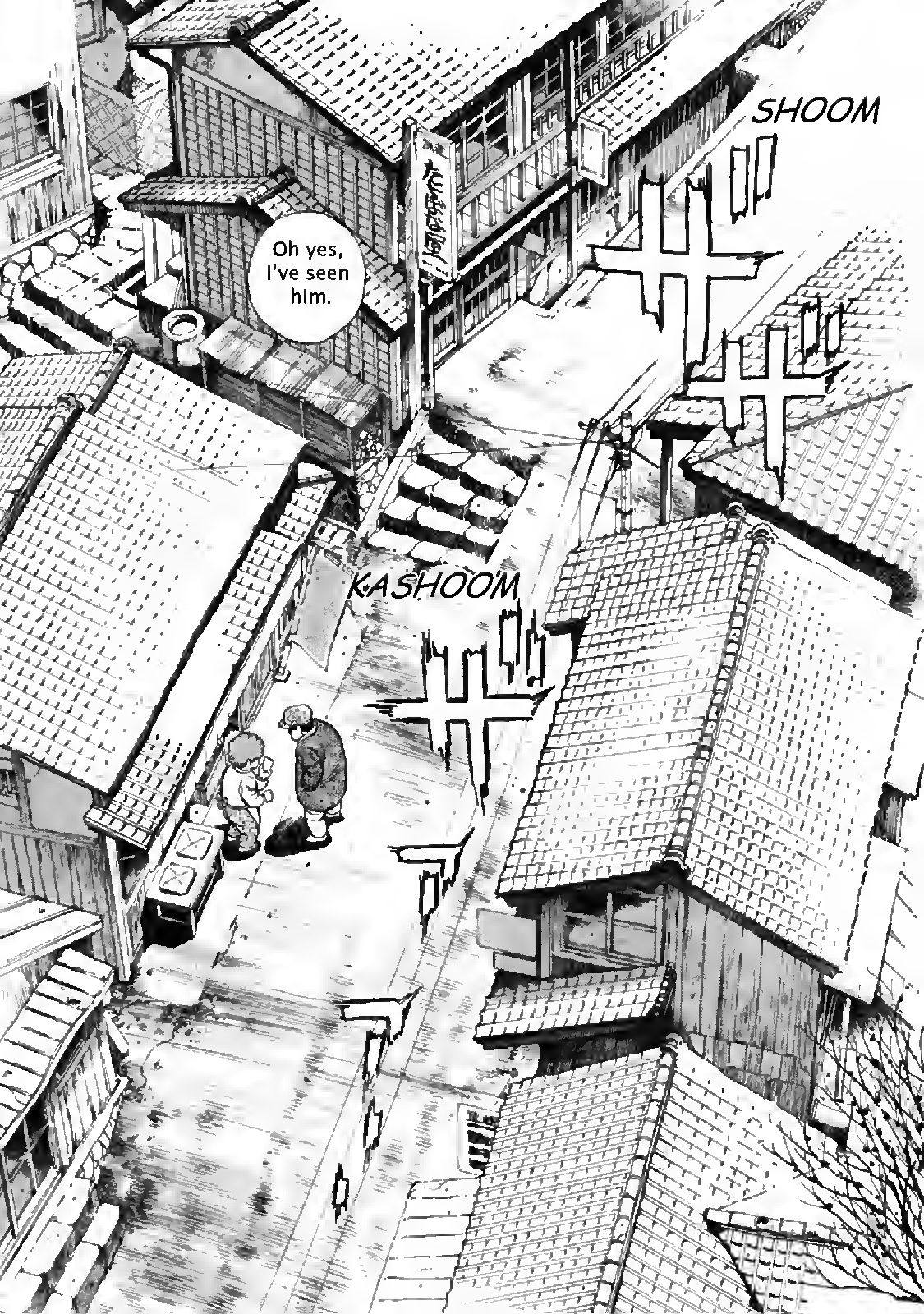

My revenge has just begun.
...
You and your daughter will be fine.
Ayako might get her feelings hurt a bit though.
Just take it easy.


FWOOH
I'm going to ruin his election, too!
And I won't be satisfied...
FWISH
Stealing away Akagi Group wasn't the final goal.


PITTER PATTER


Ha ha ha ha...


WOOSH
...until his reputation is thoroughly dragged through the mud!
Heh heh heh heh...


SHOOM
Oh yes, I've seen him.
KASHOOM

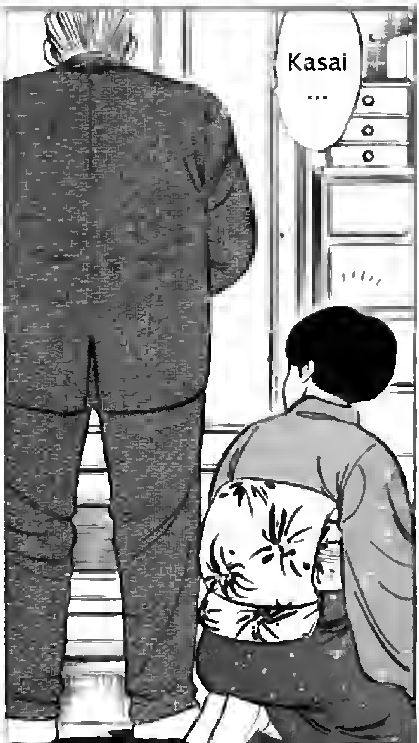
Thanks.
I'm not sure, but I think they just moved here recently, up in that apartment.
He comes in every now and again to buy something, along with his cute young daughter.
!

THUNK
ズズ…
SNIFF
…CHOO
くしっ

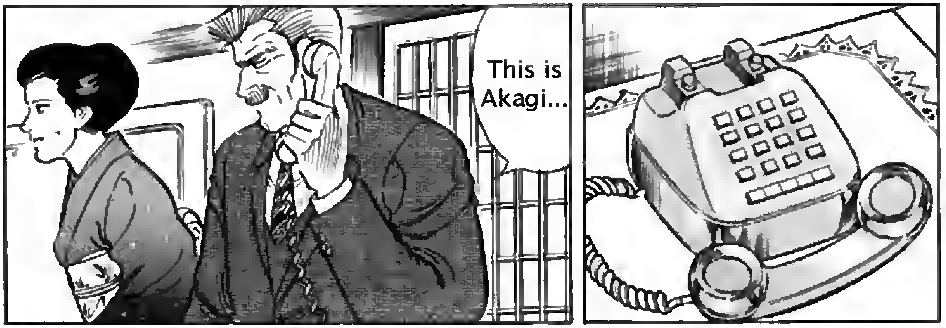
Trying to juggle the company and your election all at once is wearing on you, at your age.
Let Shoma take care of the company.
You've made the right choice, honey.

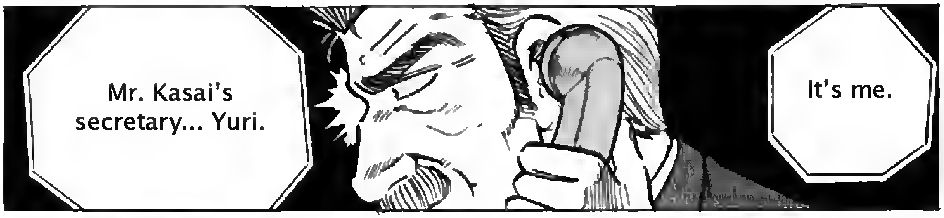
But I'm worried about your health, and it would be so helpful to Shoma if Uncle Tatsu was there by his side.
I'm sure you're still angry at me for giving my shares to Uncle Tatsu...

If only you were here at a time like this...


Kasai ...

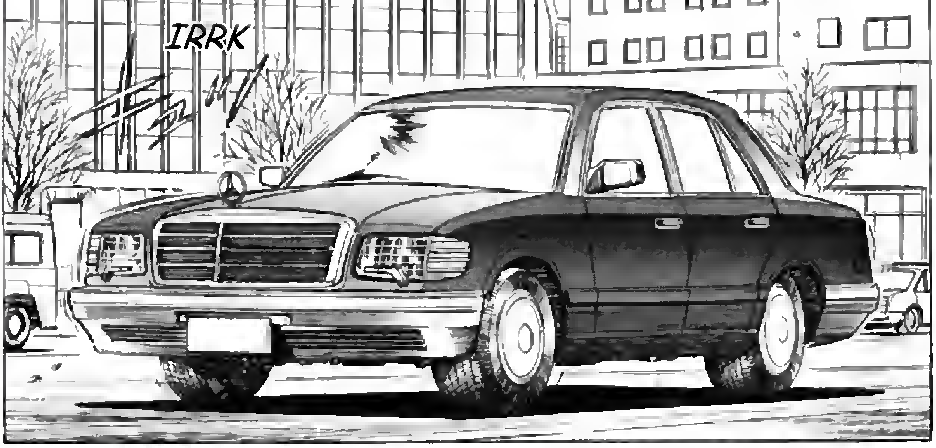
From a reporter.
Master Akagi, there's a phone call for you.
We're heading out now!

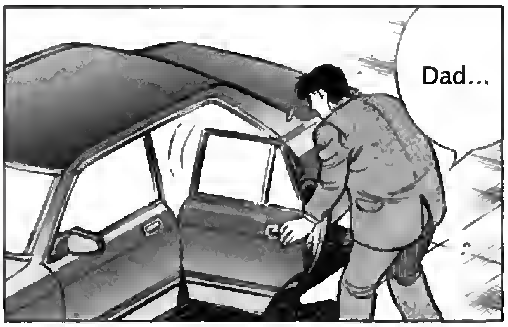

This is Akagi...


Mr. Kasai's secretary... Yuri.
It's me.

To tell you what happened.
I'm sorry to worry you like this.
I didn't know what to do, but I had to call you.
What!?
...

BOOP
BOOP
BOOP
But Mr. Kasai is alive and well.
Sorry, I've gotta go.
CLICK
He can't show himself right now.
I knew it! I just knew it!
...never gave up on you, Kasai!
I...
...!
Kasai is alive!

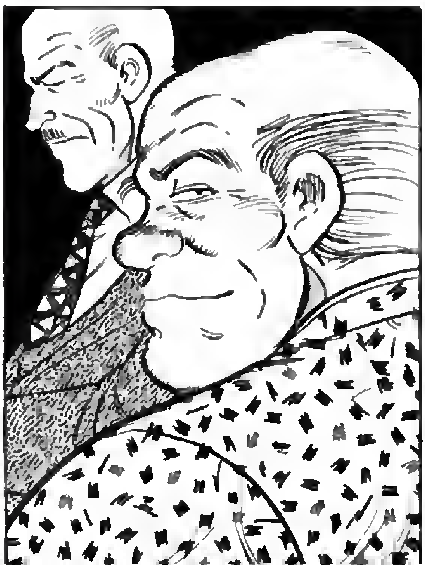

IRRK


Dad...

カチャ
KACHUK

SHING

SLAM
バアーン



"F" Volume 18 THE END

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Author
ROKUDA NOBORU

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